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"The Veena Player"

TRIVENI

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Editor: K. RAMAKOTISWARA RAU

'Triveni' is devoted to Art, Literature and History. Its main function is to interpret the Indian Renaissance in its manifold aspects.

'Triveni' seeks to draw together cultured men and women in all lands and establish a fellowship of the elect. All movements that make for Idealism, in India as well as elsewhere, receive particular attention in these columns. We count upon the willing and joyous co-operation of all lovers of the Beautiful and the True.

May this votive offering prove acceptable to Him who is the source of the 'Triveni'—the Triple Stream of Love, Wisdom and Power!

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AN APPEAL



TRIVENI

. . . he that laboureth right for love of Me
Shall finally attain! But, if in this
Thy faint heart fails, bring Me thy failure!

—The Song Celestial

'The Triple Stream'[1]

'THE VEENA PLAYER'

In connection with the visit of Rabindranath Tagore to Madras in October 1934, a Santiniketan Arts and Crafts Exhibition was held at Congress House. Among the pictures that won the admiration of several art-lovers was a line-drawing by Sjt. Nandalal Bose entitled 'The Veena Player.' On a background of light yellow silk, the artist displayed his well-known mastery over line and curve, and created a form of entrancing loveliness. It is usual to speak of the prominence of line in Indian painting, but here was something that revealed the endless possibilities of artistic creation in mere outline, without light and shade or the play of colours. As the gifted creator of this thing of beauty was present in person at the Exhibition, the Editor approached him with a request to permit him to reproduce the picture in *Triveni*. This provided an occasion to renew the acquaintance formed years ago at Santiniketan. The permission was readily given, and we are privileged to include the picture in the present number. It is infinitely more uplifting to adorn a room with one or two pictures like 'The Veena Player' than to crowd it with cheap and tawdry prints, including the calendars that seem to be the last word in ugliness. We offer our grateful thanks to Sjt. Nandalal Bose on behalf of *Triveni*. A word of praise is rightly due to the Indian Photo-Engraving Company, Calcutta, for the excellent manner in which they have reproduced the picture.

THE 'TRIVENI' TRUST

'Once again, the begging bowl'—such, inevitably, will be the feeling of most readers of *Triveni* after a perusal of

[1] 12th May, 1935

the Appeal issued by Sir S. Radhakrishnan and other distinguished friends of the journal. A word of explanation is therefore necessary.

The position of *Triveni* is not so bad now as it was two or three years ago. There are enough subscribers and advertisers to enable it to pay its way. But some subscribers fall into arrears, and every year there is a deficit of about a thousand rupees. If we could, within a single year, enlist three hundred fresh subscribers, there would be no deficit. Subscribers, however, do not come in hundreds; they come in two's and three's. Further, it is our experience that as new subscribers are added, some old subscribers drop out. And so, from year to year, the utmost we have been able to do is to maintain our list at a steady level. With greater resources, the journal could be improved considerably on its literary side, and published with regularity. It would then attract wider attention and support. It might even become a Monthly. The financing of the journal has all along remained a grave problem, for, while *Triveni* is not exactly starved, it is certainly underfed.

All this formed the subject-matter of a conversation between two valued friends of the Editor as they travelled from Waltair to Madras. Between them they evolved the idea of a Trust Fund, and communicated the news to the Editor the moment they reached Madras. It was good news,—almost too good to be true. Sir S. Radhakrishnan, who is on the Advisory Board, approved of the scheme; he only wondered if there were enough honorary workers to go about the country and collect funds. But there is a great deal of sympathy, and even intense affection for *Triveni*; there are several subscribers who cannot afford to pay a life-subscription of Rs. 100, but would yet like to render some help in addition to the payment of the annual subscription; there are life-subscribers who may be willing to pay what will last for five or six lives! Then again, there are groups of friends everywhere, with plenty of energy and influence, who would be only too glad to work for a cultural

enterprise like *Triveni*. It is true that the work has to be spread out in many provinces and over many months. But the begging bowl must be burnished and kept ready for the inflow of the streams of silver and gold and cheques that the signatories to the Appeal ask for. Till the Trust is legally constituted, Mr. K. Chandrasekharan will be in charge of the bowl. This is an opportunity not merely to relieve the Editor from financial worries but to give permanence to the journal and make of it a great national institution. As years go by, the Trust may be the means of lighting up with hope the hearts of poets, artists and scholars, struggling for recognition and reward. So then, we have done our duty by offering this explanation. It now remains for you to do yours.

GOKAK ON BENDRE

The uniqueness of *Triveni*, we must confess with regret, is that it not only does not pay its contributors for their articles but actually collects subscriptions, including life-subscriptions, from many of them. From his undergraduate days young Gokak has belonged to this generous band. After taking the M. A. with distinction, he blossomed into a Professor of the College which counted Tilak and Gokhale among its illustrious roll of teachers. His position as a poet and writer in Kannada may be judged from the fact that, last year, he was invited to preside over the Poets' Conference at Raichur. It is rare to find among the younger *litterateurs* of India a first-rate English scholar like Prof. Gokak who is prepared to devote his talents to an interpretation and critical appreciation of the literary treasures in his mother-tongue. In our view, this work is vastly more important than original literary production in English. In every linguistic unit of India, great literature is being produced. The only way to bring this to the notice of people in other provinces, and in other countries, is to write about it in English and, whenever practicable, to give good renderings which preserve the spirit and atmosphere of the originals. With this conviction, we have always set great store by articles interpreting the vernacular litera-

tures of India and translations of stories and poems. It somehow happens that gifted persons with a turn for English writing fail to see eye to eye with us and insist on sending to us their own original productions. Though we have occasionally given them publication, our heart has ever been in the other kind of writing,—the evaluation of modern Indian literature.

Gokak pays an affectionate tribute to Bendre, as man and as poet. If anything, he has erred on the side of understatement. For, though we are innocent of Kannada, we have it on the authority of one of the foremost literary men of Karnataka that Bendre's poetry is much more than 'a great promise,' that the fulfilment is also great, that his work is worthy to rank with the best in any modern language, Indian or foreign. A careful reading of Gokak's article confirms this verdict.

The Shakta[1]

Remove the thorns of life by Thy Elysian gift of prayer,
My heart with Thy sword of dawn from its thousand bonds make bare.

Pour from Thy temple's rainbow gleam
Melody in a sacred stream,

Initiate in Thy lotus-vow with the voice of Spring's delight:
Cleave in my heart with Thy sword of dawn its thousand bonds of Night.

Churn Thy moon-song of joyful morrow
From the ocean of my lonely sorrow,

Let each drop of my blood dance bugling to Thy march of might:
Cleave in my heart with Thy sword of dawn its thousand bonds of Night.

My worship be Thy frankincense,
My love—Thy rhythm-opulence ;

Silence my dread of fall—strengthen my soul to heavenward flight:
Cleave in my heart with Thy sword of dawn its thousand bonds of Night.

Let the lightning of Thy beauty shine
Chasing earth's false dreams, Mother mine!

Conquer my rebel self-love with surrender's peace and light:
Cleave in my heart with Thy sword of dawn its thousand bonds of Night.

DILIP KUMAR ROY

(Translated from his own BENGALI poem, and corrected by Sri Aurobindo)

[1] Shakta is a worshipper of Shakti—the Divine in its dynamic Mother-aspect.

'Song'

Throughout the silver reaches of the dawn
Gentle and happy with a flush of rose,
All the high loyalties their hearts had sworn
And armoured Time could never quell nor any grave might close,
Rose up and broke in foam-fresh of morning sky:
Thus Brightness spoke and heard dim earth reply—

'There is a clearness more silver than the dew,
Within the questing thought it builds a fane;
The clear-lit hope untrammelled hearts pursue
Cries in its living colours from behind the faint-washed bow of rain.
Stained with this light from beyond the world I strive
For the hate-unburdened race......fearless......and alive.'

Swift flows the endless river pearled with singing
In the far unshadowed land where wisdom starts;
Through the undefeated sky two white swans winging
Linked with the golden chain no envious corrosion parts.
Heart-held mirror shows the silver dream:
Singing, the tranquil river flows......white pinions gleam.

'ARJAVA'

(Suggested in part by two lines from W. B. Yeats' poem *The Withering of the Boughs*—

'I know of the sleepy country, where swans fly round
Coupled with golden chains, and sing as they fly.')

The Art of Nicholas Roerich

By PROF. SHANTI PRASAD VARMA, M.A.

Art is the expression of life. Those dreamy moments which we devote to the realisation of this eternal life are the only moments in which we truly ' live.' They alone are the symbol of utmost wakefulness. We do not live by merely keeping our eyelids widely apart. The mind which does not resound to the sweet twitter of a bird, the heart which does not leap with joy at the smile of a flower, the soul which does not see its reflection in the twinkle of the stars, and does not move with the mad waves of the ocean, cannot be a proper vehicle of life. Those who really live have in their eyes the glamour of the eternity of life, in their emotions a sensitiveness to the sorrow of the whole creation, in their soul a great rapture, in their love an infinite expanse. They are the persons who can find companions in the snow-clad mountain-peaks and who can share their feelings with the withering leaves of autumn. They alone can create art.

The small storms and tempests of our world do not reach the Himalayan heights of art. Our petty prejudices, the ties between man and man, selfishness and passion—all scatter themselves in the lower ranges and die down. On the heights the pink rays of the setting sun play hide and seek with the whiteness of snow. In this ocean of beauty the artist alone keeps himself above the thousand coils of irrepressible creative urge. The rest remains merged in beauty. Whatever is created out of this turmoil is the eternal possession of mankind.

The name of Nicholas Roerich is highly reputed as one of those few personalities who have been able to pitch their tents at the Everest heights of art. This great artist, poet, thinker, and researcher is spending his sixties in the final *sadhana* of life in the Kulu district of the Himalayan valleys.

The duality of the world he has left long behind him. Time and space lose their dividing lines at those heights of art which he has attained, and thus make it difficult for us to place him in the conventional grades of painters. He has so completely harmonized himself with the unity of life in its diversity that it has become impossible to trace behind his colours the influence of country or creed. Born in a Russian village and learning the rudiments of his art in St. Petersburg and Paris, he has today imprinted his name on the rocks of the whole world. More than three thousand of his paintings are adorning the various art galleries in all the continents, an honour never attained by any other painter. A sky-scraper of forty-nine storeys has been specially raised in New York for the exhibition of his works. The 'Kalabhavan' of Rai Krishnadas at Benares is also fortunate in possessing a dozen of his best creations.

The art of Nicholas Roerich is universal. It bears upon it neither the imprint of East nor of West. Roerich has been a ceaseless traveller and has drawn his paintings in various countries, in different surroundings; and at all places he has dipped his brush deep into the soul of the atmosphere. This has been the key to his success. The expressive colours and the surprising originality which he has exhibited in his works on the Himalayas are incomparable. He has completely merged his personality in the snowy expanse of the Himalayas.

He is famous as a wizard in colours. The touch of his brush, the depth of his colours and the clear vagueness of his outlines bring with them a tempest of emotions, but what appeals to me most in the paintings of Nicholas Roerich is his symbolism. There is a school in the West which confuses painting with photography. It places *Satyam* above both *Sivam* and *Sundaram*. But true art does not lie in merely dipping your brush in the colour-box and sketching what is seen by the physical eye alone. A Japanese writer of the 18th century considered it a great fault of the Western pictures that they dived too deeply into the realities, and called these pictures mere groups of words.

To create art is to enter into the inmost depths of life and to express its soul in beautiful colours. Nicholas Roerich does not think much of painting 'matter' as it appears to the naked eye, but he has entered deep into feelings and has been able to catch by his artistic eye a full glimpse of the eternal truth of life and has expressed that great truth in his art.

The paintings represent the deepest poetic emotions at their highest. It appears that the painter has filled his outlines with songs which have lost their voice into the faintness of the lines, and thus his creation is all poetry in colours. Einstein once wrote that he was never impressed by anything so much as by a painting of Roerich. To see one of his paintings is an education in the highest poetic culture.

It is one of Roerich's special virtues to give fitting names to his paintings. The artist finds it difficult to name his latest offspring. What he paints in the tempest of his feelings is sometimes incomprehensible to himself in 'saner' moments. But Nicholas Roerich is an artist who never slumbers, who has made the art the expression not of his madness but of his sanity. Whatever he creates with the strength of his genius out of the waves of the emotions belongs as much to him as the child to its mother. He may play with it and fondle it. He may kiss and cajole it. He gives a simple, easy name to his creation at the mere mention of which the whole picture stands at your beck and call, naked in all its beauty.

'Remembrance' is one of these small colour poems. In the distance, the blue peaks of the Himalayas, with all the rapture of Nature in their limbs, stand smiling. A man with an air of self-confidence in his expression, is riding a white steed. In the corner, two women stand looking wistfully at him. Their hearts seem to spring into the gleam of their eyes and ask, 'Will you remember?' The artist has so arranged things that the question reverberates through the whole atmosphere. The traveller looks back, but the horse will not stop. And then, who can remember this small hut in the wide range of mountains? It will fade from the traveller's vision in a

moment. Then gradually, these high cliffs too will fall back, because the traveller has to move on. Then, in another world, will the traveller who has not stopped and is still moving, be able to remember all this? Who can tell?

The work of Nicholas belongs to that range of art where there is no division and classification, but where there is only an effort to realise the ultimate harmony. This has carried the artist so near to Nature. In his paintings, Nature does not serve the slavish purpose of decorating man's activities or giving fuller expression to his feelings, but spreads with the fullest freedom of its own expanse. Men with all their pettiness do not even dare look up at the high cliff, but pass on, with awe and reverence in their eyes. There is a painting named the 'Dowry of the Princess.' The mountain peaks rise higher and higher. But the dowry of the princess, hiding all its grandeur in its small bosom, moves slowly on, and occupies hardly a tenth part of the whole picture. In the 'Audience' a man sits down in a corner and listens to the vast message of Nature. In 'Lord Buddha' and the 'Leader' Nature appears so much akin to man that the scattered mountain ranges give us an impression of human children at play.

Nicholas Roerich, in spite of his birth in the West, is nearer to the soul of the East. The unity behind all life was perhaps never before understood so well by any body in the West. But let us acknowledge one thing. In the whole history of Indian painting, though the painters sat in the lap of Nature herself, they could never give such a predominance to her as we find in the works of Roerich. The Indian painter always measured the value of Nature in human coins. The Chinese and Japanese, who owe their inspiration in colours to India, seem to have been more moved by the vast infinity of Nature. Our painters could never paint Nature in her great seclusion.

Roerich has drawn his motifs largely from Nature but he does not so much enter into the form as into the spirit. His landscapes are not mere reflections of Nature. They are

poems in colour. Emerson rightly expressed the true function of this type of art. 'In landscape,' he writes, 'the painter should give the suggestion of a fairer creation than we know. The details, the prose of Nature, he should omit, and give us the spirit of splendour. He should know that the landscape has beauty to the eye because it expresses the thought which is to him good, and this because the same power which sees through his eyes is seen in that spectacle; and he will come to value the expression of Nature, and not Nature itself, and so exalts in his copy the features which please him. He will give the gloom of gloom and the sunshine of sunshine.' These words can be literally applied to the paintings of Roerich.

Nicholas Roerich is a creative artist. His creations have enriched the richness of the world. He is not one of those millions of painters, who spend their life-time in imitating higher artists. Roerich's technique of painting, his emotions and the method of their expression, are all his own. What he has attained in his successful life of thought and action, he has expressed with great fondness in his pictures. His pictures are not merely full of deep emotions, but also reflect the intensity of his thoughts. Behind each painting of Roerich there is a philosphy of life and an effort to solve problems which have been confusing us for ages.

The path of Nicholas Roerich is one of peace and love. His subjects of creation are not the restless hours of tumultuous night when the bedewed lamp-posts look wistfully at the sottish crowd, but the snow-peaked cliffs of the Himalayas and the vastness of the sky. In the eternal solitude of life the art of Nicholas Roerich has reached its climax. He has portrayed women much better than men, because they are more akin to beauty and art, but his mountain ranges cannot be rivalled even by the portraiture of Kwan-thin, the Chinese goddess of grace.

The life of Nicholas Roerich itself is the expression of a great truth. His name has resounded from one corner of the world to another, but he has found the progressive reali-

sation of life, not in the ball-rooms of Europe nor in the sky-scrapers of New York, but in the 'Uruswati Institute' which he has established in the lap of the Himalayas. Humanity itself will one day get tired of this tumult of death and will seek its true life in the vast expanse of Nature.

But Roerich does not believe that to seek eternal peace we have to flee physically from the madding crowd. He has himself dreamt the best visions of art in the busiest streets of the world, and given them form and colour. Roerich thinks that, by drawing the horizons of beauty round us, we can attain those heights where there is no place for the smaller things of life. At one place he writes: 'In beauty we unite. Let us repeat these words not on snowy heights but in the tumult of the towns. And taking this to be the sole truth, with a joyful smile, we welcome the future.'

The pictures of Roerich are even more optimistic than his life. In Rai Krishna's collection, there is a painting named 'Kalki.' 'Kalki' stands as a symbol of optimism, but the feelings which have been given voice by Roerich in that painting, where this incarnation of hope appears in the clouds above the Himalayas, are too deep for our expression. 'The Sign of Maitreya' also paints the future Messiah of the world in the same vivid colours. But the artist in Roerich has not lost sight of the hard facts of life in the golden dreams of his optimism. 'The Unspilt Cup' is another of his immortal works. A man is descending from the Himalayan peaks full of snow and glaciers. He holds in his hand the cup of eternal life. The path is steep. There is danger of its contents being spilt. There is always that danger. Who is there among us who has carried his cup through the steep path without spilling a drop?

Nicholas Roerich's ideas regarding art are also worth studying. He does not believe in art being for art's sake alone. This principle casts a bitter reflection of keeping ourselves aloof from the humdrum of everyday life. It gives flowing tresses and squint eyes and frock-coats to the artists. Roerich considers that art alone to be true which unites. His

beliefs are that 'art alone will establish unity among mankind,' and that 'it is for the enjoyment of each of us.' 'Each man,' he writes, 'can feel the joy of true art. The doors of its sacred expression should be open for all. The light of art will fill all hearts with a new love.'

In this period of Indian Renaissance, when art is undergoing the travail of a new birth, the existence of this universal poet of colour in our midst should be a matter of congratulation for us. The renascent painting of modern India has a surprising record of progress. The names of Abanindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose and Kshitindra Nath Majumdar must cause pride to any country. We have been able to revive the memory of Ajanta, but as the famous art-critic O. C. Gangoly thinks, our modern art 'is hardly yet pulsating with the throb of modern aspirations.' A study of Roerich's art will lead our painters nearer to the soul of the world.

A Summer Night

The night is cool ; the oppressive glare of day
Has left no trace on earth ; a landward breeze
Freshening and blowing through the spring-decked trees
Echoes the ceaseless roar of a troubled bay.
The young Moon with the monsoon clouds at play
Sends forth a dreamy gaze ; a distant flute
Is marred by the barking of a haunted brute ;
Forces of darkness hold the world in sway.
A thousand thought-forms racing through the mind,
Feelings of hope and fear, of joy and woe
That rise and fall like waves tossed by the wind—
Where are they shaped? Towards what goal their flow?
Nothing affects the Soul's eternal sky
That watches in silence all this passing by.

ANILBARAN ROY

The Third Assembly

By M. CHALAPATHI RAU, M.A., B.L.

India's Parliament, as constituted, is like a Shavian burlesque on all the Parliaments of the world. The Legislative Assembly is tired of its verbose and superfluous existence; and the Council of State is not even a good caricature of the average Upper House. But the Assembly which was presided over by Patel, and which was the third of its series, will for a long time bear the palm for wit and oratory, for fun and fireworks. It marked the apex of the parliamentary epoch which had been inaugurated by the Duke of Connaught, with appropriate vagueness.

The Third Assembly contained galaxies and constellations and scintillated with the most brilliant stars. There were old men in their seventies and young men in their twenties. There were Swarajists in fanciful frock-coats rattling off in an Oxford accent and Executive Members smiling gently like genial Babus. There were Pandits who quoted from moth-eaten text-books written in the most luxuriant of dead languages and modern wits who recited the latest limericks. They were intrepid and alert, gay and gregarious, these epicure legislators who rose like hardened statesmen to brace up to a paper crisis and moved and talked out adjournment motions with patriotic unconcern. They had their shadow Cabinets and imitation Cabals. They ate good lunches and posed kindly to photographers as often as possible. They remembered the most ancient history and knew by heart the most recent anecdotes; and if, as Sheridan said of Dundas, they sometimes resorted to their memory for their jokes and to their imagination for their facts, they could show off, as occasion demanded, Balfourian elegance, Asquithian terseness, or Curzonian pomposity. They platitudinized and pot-boiled, they punned and parodied. They celebrated

the premature death of Diarchy in a funeral of words. The debates of those days would not at all disgrace the House of Commons; while Patel presided like a Greek god over the garrulous constitution-mongers who in an year or two developed a passion for token cuts. The eloquent speakers sat to each bill as to a banquet, and if there were the inevitable bores who stammered their speeches or droned out their composed music, the members could doze or walk out at will.

There were the Laurel-and-Hardy comics of Kabiruddin Ahmed. There was Muddiman, Home Member and genial ring-master, who pleasantly pooh-poohed those adjournment motions and parodied those token cuts. Blackett could command words as well as he could command figures. Innes could speak crashing rhetoric. Motilal Nehru himself was formidable with his learned ponderosities and long-tailed perorations. Lajpat Rai was lava and brimstone when he was roused. Malaviya could coo for hours and hours going back to the time when Adam delved and Eve span, and Jayakar had a silver tongue which could be sweet or sonorous. Kelkar jewelled his phrases, while Gidney extemporized and hummed and hawed, and Thakurdas could boom away like a bill of lading. Jinnah spoke with glittering polish; Chaman Lall thundered with the proper accent; Goswami erupted with grace and temper; and Shanmukham Chetti talked like the tote. The wise men of the East conversed accusing and applauding one another; the Constitution rocked like a cradle; and Patel presided over his infant Pandemonium with frowns and nods and profound silences.

'The heads of the parties are like the heads of snakes carried on by their tails,' said William Pulteney. Pandit Motilal Nehru, with all his princely hauteur, did not ignore the importance of the tail. He fostered his followers with loving pride and care. He took a god-fatherly interest in the brilliant triumvirate of debaters, Chaman Lall, Goswami and Chetti, whose interest in politics, however, has been more Platonic than practical. The Deputy Leader of the Party,

Srinivasa Iyengar, had astounded his countrymen by his hurricane career. He went to the Assembly with a reputation for strategy, for he had out-generalled the powerful communal party in Madras and given it a ghastly defeat. At his worst, he revealed the 'very ambiguity of ambiguity,' but he added his quota to the gaiety of the proceedings by his breezy manner and scintillating wit. He had a love for forcing events and making history; but history grew out of his control; it went with a headlong crash from incident to incident. While some of the Swarajists distinguished themselves during question hour, there were others who remained ornamental for the most part, for, just as some gentlemen prefer blondes some Swarajists prefer jails. It is not that they cannot talk or think. They have courage but no convictions. It was not so, however, with Jamnadas Mehta, of whom it is impossible to say whether he is a comrade becoming a millionaire or a millionaire becoming a comrade. He had a massive personality, added to a matchless wit; the one organized strikes, the other laughed at them. He spoke like an oracle on high finance, and counteracted the clear-headed but morose leadership of N. M. Joshi, whose is a model bourgeois career. Ranga Iyer was the champion gossiper; he denounced the Government from his seat in the Chamber and made up for it by his sweetness in the lobbies.

Lala Lajpat Rai was the most manful and lion-hearted of our leaders. He had led the Nationalist Party successfully against the Swarajists in Northern India, and left bitterness behind him. It is unfortunate that our leaders cannot expand within the bounds of foreign domination; but, if we are permitted to compare without being charged as parallel-hunters, we may say that Lajpat Rai had the bravery and brusque picturesqueness of Garibaldi. He always spoke as man to man, without seeking parenthesis or pot-boiled epigrams. Pandit Malaviya had battled restlessly for his country, with copious eloquence, with all the weight of his moderation and culture, without betraying either bitterness or humour. He flung his precise metallic sentences in pro-

fusion. If 'Gladstone's eloquence was calorific and Balfour's circumforaneous,' Malaviya's eloquence was both calorific and circumforaneous. He was, according to Montagu, 'the most active politician in any council,' 'a man of beautiful appearance, a Brahmin clad in white, with a beautiful voice, perfect manners, and an insatiable ambition.' If Lajpat Rai was passion, and Malaviya was rhetoric, Jayakar was all argument. He, like Sapru, has since won fame as a part of our political Gemini. He has the gritty appearance of a dictator; but he has monumental suavity and manners, and a scholar's love for books; he is a kind of Baldwin, without pipe or pigs. He is our grand collaborator. He collaborated with Kelkar for responsive co-operation. He collaborated with Moonjee for regenerating Hinduism. He collaborated with Gandhi for social reform and Sapru for political reform. But his career is woefully incongruous because, while he has admitted the attractiveness of the palm, he has never liked to be soiled with the dust. He is the embodiment of the musty old maxim that speech is silver and silence golden. If a man like Austen Chamberlain has suffered from the greater fame of his father, a similar thing may be said of Kelkar, whose own contribution has been overshadowed by the gorgeous fame of Tilak. He wrote and spoke with persuasive wit. He coined metaphors that smack of literature and humour that is caustic. He is best remembered as the most enduring relic of Tilak; it is as though a temple were built over the tooth of the Buddha.

'Jinnah is a clever man,' noted Montagu in his Diary 'and it is an outrage that such a man should have no chance of running the affairs of his country.' Jinnah's life has been a commentary on this sentence; and it is, like similar lives in India, a life of futility. He had started his career in a blaze of idealism. He held out the promise of developing into a kind of Younger Pitt; and Sarojini Devi, in an ecstacy of vision, had prophesied that he had all the makings of a Mazzini for India. But he would not follow the consequences of his own ruthless logic; and except for a beauty of pose and

an unfailing dignity of manner, he did not keep the promise of his early years. The Younger Pitt has behaved like the elder Tadpole; Sarojini Devi no longer practises the dangerous game of prophesying; he has become, as what Sapru called, a spoilt child; and disastrously enough for everybody, his brilliant qualities of analysis and dramatic impersonation made him a superb advocate of lost causes. He suffers from too high a sense of self-respect. He cannot woo like Sastri or kotow like Patro. His heart is neither with a country which has changed beyond the most daring of his dreams, nor with a Government which has no seat to offer him. He is too lordly to be anybody's minor colleague. Jinnah's greatness is that, in a nation of orators, he is not an orator. He is too self-conscious for that. But he is a born debater of extraordinary power. His speeches are models of expostulation. They are full of gestures and other minor graces. He is not witty or rasping in riposte; but he is grave, dignified, and studiedly sincere. The President must only give him time to perambulate from point to point, from irony to invective, from invective to prophecy, and he can score at every turn with crushing retorts and clinching perorations. We can even now read his speech on Steel Protection with thrills, and admire the stubbornness with which he defended himself and the Government against a pack of howling patriots. His interventions always enlivened the proceedings with drama. He expostulated to the Government, he turned towards the Swarajists, he bandied words with the back-benchers, he warned, he threatened, he prophesied. It was done with glitter and polish; his victory was pyrrhic but it soothed his self-respect; he again and again proved his importance in the scheme of things by attacking the Government and voting for them; and, after all, he celebrated the superiority of Mahomed Ali Jinnah. It was, however, not easy for him to keep pace with Thakurdas, who spoke with punch. Thakurdas had audacious duels with Blackett; his speeches were remarkable for their matter-of-fact openings, their reasoned argument, their relay of impressive facts, and

their inevitable conclusions. Jinnah's centre party was effective, not only because it was a centre party but also because it was led by a superb politician, who took to politics as ducks take to water.

'How imperfectly did mountains exist before Wordsworth,' writes Aldous Huxley; and we may say with equal truth that Parliamentary life in India since Patel has been imperfect, if not extinct. Patel gave the Assembly a character which it had lacked and an advertisement which it ardently aspired for. There was nothing very remarkable about his pre-Presidential work. He was a Congress member who wanted provincial autonomy, a Mayor of the Bombay Corporation who showed a fist of mail, and a member of the local Council and then of the Assembly who often contradicted himself. But he was made of the stuff of which good ginger is made, and Montagu had to commend him in his Diary as 'obviously the most talkative member of the Council.' Patel, like the age in which he lived, despised rhetoric and applauded invective. Force of assertion, says Bernaud Shaw, is the alpha and omega of style, and Patel did nothing but assert. He resembled one of those Greek figures, with a face that contained all the elegies in the world, a patriarchal beard, and eyes that were unutterably sad; and when he was re-elected as President a second time unanimously, he took the Chair like bearded Jove amidst thunders and lightnings and forebodings of constitutional cataclysms.

The Third Assembly started with a sensation. Motilal Nehru moved an adjournment motion about the detention of S. C. Mitra and raised the question of the privileges of the members of the House. But Muddiman came out with his 'thrice-told tales' about the dangerous virtues of detenus and mythical terrorist societies for which India is gaining an undeserved reputation. Then they plunged into the bloodless battle of the ratios, and member after member tirelessly discussed the behaviour of the rupee. The vote on the 'Executive' Demand provided the best fun of the session. Patel declared amidst laughter that 'Mr. Jayakar

wanted to reduce it to one rupee, Mr. Srinivasa Iyengar wanted to reduce the demand to six pies, Mr. Kelkar to three pies, and Mr. Acharya to one pie.' Jayakar was bitter that 'even the carpet expense was non-votable,' and warned the Government to 'beware of the anger of a weak man.' Kelkar expressed the paradox of the situation pithily when he said: 'Yesterday we were asked to vote for 1s. 6d because it was a *de facto* ratio. Today we are asked to vote for the Government because it is a *de facto* Government!' The Government itself was loth to change its vision because, as one member said, it was afraid of becoming squint-eyed in the effort. The autumn session was comparatively quiet, and the House was busy about the status and privileges of its members, postal employees, and seamen's problems; the Government had some hair-breadth escapes; and bills like the Indian Divorce Bill were passed even without discussion.

Lord Birkenhead had brought in the rollicking spirit of Bolingbroke into twentieth century politics. He would not brook inferior intellect. His arrogance was invincible, and his apathy was such that he would refer to terrible communal riots as mere 'collisions.' He had made much of the fact that the country was tired of 'the sterile and reactionary character of the creed of the rigid Swarajist,' and that a number of the new members had come in 'as followers of their own individual consciences.' He declined to be 'the slave of a date,' and left to his successors a frightful heritage in the Simon Commission. The times were distinctly inauspicious. The country was showing unparalleled petulance. Katherine Mayo had become the most famous Miss in Christendom, and mud was exchanged between Asia and America. Lord Irwin went on delivering his Methodist speeches. But almost all the Indian leaders were sulky. The Assembly rose to the occasion in a historic debate on the Commission. There was brilliant parrying, and retort and counter-retort. The Opposition delivered themselves of their philippics. There was a jolt when M. C. Rajah seemed to make an ideal of his inferiority complex, or Gour became apocalyptic about the sanctity of

Statutory Commissions. Sir Zulfikar Ali Khan tried to enlighten the House by concluding that 'no country remained under subjection unless there were defects in national character,' and Crerar declared pompously that 'the issues are too clear, the facts too apparent, the omens too unambiguous.' There was no gap in the relentless Opposition. Blackett twitted that 'Mr. Jinnah has been assimilated by the Congress Party,' but there was not the slightest flutter. Suhrawardy complained bitterly of 'the All India Muslim League session at Calcutta where Pandits harangued.' But the Opposition was overwhelmingly victorious. The credit was due to Jinnah's steadfastness, which was unexpected and unequalled. He had been even steadier on the Army question. 'I do not want the garrison of His Majesty's force to insure me,' he said, 'I want a national army'; and at one time he burst into a passion and announced that 'these yarns won't do.' There were exciting interludes. The co-operation between Jinnah and Motilal Nehru was not always harmonious. When in a subsequent session the National Demand was moved, Jinnah was found saying, 'let us not raise a controversy among ourselves.' 'Who is doing it,' said Motilal; 'you' said Jinnah; 'you' said Motilal; and the House laughed. But towards the close of its hectic life, it was the President who monopolised all the limelight of the House.

Hitherto history had seemed to be the monopoly of Premiers; but Patel showed that it was also the privilege of courageous Presidents. When Sir James Crerar became the Home Member he brought the manners of a tight-laced martinet. Hailey had been eloquent, and Muddiman genial, but Crerar was curt, tidy, and cryptic. He easily disturbed even the harmony of speech-making, and aired his affection for Public Safety Bills. Blackett was witty, though overbearing; Schuster sang the sweetest melodies though they told of saddest budgets; Rainey had a style of making Railways interesting; the Mitras and Mitters were efficient and friendly; but they were all made ineffectual by Crerar's cold blood-curdling recitations. He once more repeated Muddi-

man's 'thrice told tales.' The relations between the front benches were bitter. The President had to hold the scales between a Government which was too sullen and an Opposition which was too talkative. There were many pitched battles. The President himself was shadowed. Members smelt gun-powder plots; and once Lancelot Graham was the innocent Guy Fawkes. The Assembly resounded with recriminations, and shades of future generations saw the thrilling spectacle of the first elected President making history by his histrionic talents. Patel stood up like Prospero to summon constitutional storms. He summoned them with trumpets and deliberate gusto. He distilled his anger into the most vitriolic damnation of the Government, with a picturesque variation of ambiguous epithets.

Patel behaved like a perpetual crisis. He wielded his sceptre like a birch. Once he chid the Commander-in-chief for not being present to answer a debate. Another time Blackett was heard to mutter something, and he was pulled up and asked to make himself heard. Patel's decisions themselves burst like bomb-shells. He bombed the Reserve Bank Bill. At the time of the Meerut Trial he bombed the Public Safety Bill. The situation was made too thrilling when bombs were thrown into the Assembly and Bhagat Singh became a hero to men of words who admire men of action. The Government were rude. 'In view of the fact that the Government are not prepared to show the Chair the courtesy of disclosing what their plans are, I refrain from giving a ruling,' the President declared. Over the question of their control of the Assembly gallery, he again bombed and won. He, with his usual pluck, refused to follow the Congress resolution asking its members to boycott the legislatures. He explained the position of a President, 'who doffs his vivid party colours, be they buff or blue, crimson or yellow, and wears instead the white flower of a neutral political life.' At the time of the bitter Bardoli crisis, he declared his sympathies a little too openly and bravely. Unkindly critics whispered with bated breath that Patel was seen going home

in the company of Motilal Nehru, and that the syntax and even the phrases of the President's statements bore the oil and learning of the Pandit. Arthur Moore committed his most blazing indiscretion when he tried to move a vote of no-confidence in the Chair, but the Government preferred to butter its parsnips with elaborate euphemism, and Patel added insult to injury. When he left with a proud shrug the scene of all his political glory, muffled up in all his dignity, it was to the blare of guns and trumpets. He gave himself a hearty send-off, but an embittered Viceroy spoilt the show by ungraceful references and veiled suggestions. It was tragic to see Patel pass from continent to continent in search of health, and the tragedy was complete when, robbed of his health and thunder, a cynic to the core, a fighter to the last, he died in Vienna amidst the dust of empires.

The Third Assembly lingered on, under the Presidentship of Mahomed Yakub. 'The weak man' had shown his anger. The Swarajists had become once more 'rigid,' 'reactionary,' and 'sterile.' Malaviya too was tired of this pantomime and resigned after a time. Jayakar was left to lead the Opposition. As he rose to speak, he declared he was 'the remnant of the old Nationalist Opposition, for the last time to sing the swan song.' The atmosphere was quiet and ghostly. The Simon Commission Report was dragged into discussion; and there were some signs of life. Other minor problems were attended to listlessly; seamen and postal employees were disposed of quickly. The last sitting was devoted to the purchase of the Assam-Bengal Railway. A slight amendment was moved; it was accepted on behalf of the Government; and the sitting was over. The President was tremulous: 'We are at the end of our career!' He desired the time-old honour of shaking hands with the members. He ominously said that he did not 'know how many will come back.' The Assembly was dying. It had tried to make history, which it was beyond its scope and power to make. It struggled for a while, then died, slowly, imperceptibly, unhonoured and unsung.

Some Recent Novels of Tagore

By Dr. Jayanta Kumar Das-Gupta, M.A., Ph.D. (London)

For nearly twelve years after the publication of 'The Home and the World' Rabindranath did not write any novel. Many people thought that the veteran author had given up writing long works of fiction. In 1930 was published Tagore's 'Sesher Kabita' (The Last Poem) which created tremendous enthusiasm in Bengal. It was a good retort of Tagore to the pseudo-realists and sentimentalists. Rabindranath proved that a really good work could be written without sex-craze being made the pivot of the story.

The hero of this novel, Amit Ray, an Oxford man and a Bar-at-Law, was stylish in everything—dress, taste and talk. He had what is called a distinguished air. He showed an interest in women but he was never keen about them. His relatives regarded him as a will-o'-the-wisp. Culture to Amit was not the same thing as it meant to his sisters. On the contrary, he used to speak against everything that was accepted in so-called decent society. Amit always praised new writers, while he would speak in disparagement of older ones. He was perfectly correct when he said: 'Those poets who have no shame to live till sixty or seventy inflict punishment upon themselves by making themselves cheap. Imitators begin to jeer at them from all sides. The quality of their works deteriorates; they have to pilfer from their older works.' People gave up all hopes of Amit and opined that he would pass his life with shadowy things.

At Shillong in Assam, following a motor accident, he met a young lady who changed the course of his life. Amit thought that Labanya (such was the name of this lady) was his ideal woman. Her voice reminded him of the thin smoke of the best Indian tobacco, without the fume of nicotine and with the scent of rose water. Then

began real life for him. In Labanya's mind there was also a new consciousness. These two seemed to have been made for each other. Amit's love-making was carried on through poetry. They gave each other pet names. But Labanya felt that he would never settle down. To Amit marriage was something vulgar. Literature was more to his taste. So Labanya did not beguile herself with false hopes. She knew that Amit would not be able to retain anything after winning it. She was against her marriage with him, because in marriage nearness might tire him and he would find her totally different from what he had thought her to be. She would better remain in his life as a dream though short-lived. She was in a fix. The stir had come into her heart and she wanted to say that she loved, that her life, her world, had become perfect with the touch of love. Eventually it was settled that she should marry Amit.

Destiny, however, worked in another way. To Shillong came Amit's sister Sissy with her friend Ketty, an erstwhile sweetheart of Amit at Oxford. Labanya persuaded Amit that it was proper for him to accept Ketty. Thus they separated and all that remained of their association was happy memory. She passed out of his life as suddenly as she had entered it. The remembrance of that which had vanished out of her life, ere it could become a reality, did not pain her. On the contrary, the memory of the past was to her a priceless treasure. Labanya is the symbol of the eternal feminine who kindles a fire in the heart of man and makes his existence a poetic thing.

'Sesher Kabita' is partly a picture of ultra-modern society. Amit's sisters smoked cigarettes. In everything, they are apart from the women that Rabindranath has depicted in his previous novels. They dance, drive cars, mix freely with men, sit on the arms of their chairs, and call men 'naughty.' They belong to a society which regards gossip as table-talk, smartness as fashion, Bohemianism as life, and their gay and light-hearted life is evident from the rustle of their silk *saris* and the brilliance of their meaningless chatter. Here Tagore

is in one of his best satirical veins. Yet Labanya, Jogamaya, Sobhanlal and Jati Sankar belong to an altogether different society, the more conservative branch of Bengali life.

'Sesher Kabita' is not to be judged as an ordinary novel. It is poetry and fiction mixed together. It could have been made shorter, because there are occasions when it becomes slightly monotonous in spite of its graceful style and poetic idealism. 'Sesher Kabita' does not possess the larger background of 'Gora' with its complex problems. It is a love-story pure and simple. The psychological complexities of 'The Home and the World' are absent from it. It might have been the swan-song of a distinguished literary career, yet it is not the last contribution of Tagore to modern fiction.

Strictly speaking 'Dui Bon' (The Two Sisters) which came in 1933 is more like a short story. The characters are few in number. The complication in the plot arises from Sasanka's infatuation for his sister-in-law Urmimala. The real interest of the book is to be found in Tagore's depiction of two different types of woman—the 'mother type' and the 'lover type.' Sasanka's wife Sarmila, who was older of the two sisters, belonged to the former type, while Urmimala belonged to the latter class. The 'lover type' of woman charms and fascinates man but the motherly woman sustains him till the end, and she is strong in will and character. The former is impulsive, while the latter is firm, and she thus saves Sasanka's life from wreck in every sense of the word. Of the two men, Sasanka, who is an engineer by profession, is more manly, but the physician Nirod is a sham. In fact, he is utterly despicable. He talked big but his selfish nature could not long be hidden.

'Malancha' (The Flower Garden) which was published early in 1934 contains three main characters—Aditya, Niraja and Sarala. Here also is the same complexity in Aditya's wedded life as we find in that of Sasanka. Once he had loved Niraja very much and for ten years their love was the envy of friends. But with her illness everything was changed. Sarala had been his beloved years ago and the old love returned after many years. To save the situation Sarala went

to prison as a picketer. But she was let off. Niraja wanted to see her married to Aditya, but just before her death she became unusually excited and hastened her end. Both these stories are weak. Their themes are curiously similar. The end in both is a patched-up affair. There is nothing remarkable in them excepting the style; but in a novel, surely, the style is not everything.

With the publication of 'Char Adhyaya' (The Four Chapters) towards the end of 1934, a furore was created in certain circles in Bengal which regard it unfortunate on the part of Rabindranath to have referred to a person who is no longer able to defend himself. It is certainly unfair to expose to the public ear something which was confided to Rabindranath in private by a man who is dead. 'To speak or write lightly of departed genius is offensive,' remarks a great thinker, and this act of indiscretion many people are not inclined to overlook as an instance of poetic license. The novel would have suffered in no way had the great writer discreetly left out the reference to the dead soul.

Politics forms an important ingredient of this novel. This is not the first time that Tagore has touched politics in his novels. Both 'Gora' and 'The Home and the World' contain references to political events. In fact, in this work he shows once more the futility of what he regards as subversive methods, as he had done previously in 'The Home and the World.' But while in that novel he was to some extent timorous, here he is far more frank and outspoken. In the intervening years he has grown more pronounced in his views. The background of 'The Four Chapters' is the Terrorist Movement—that subterraneous and insidious current of life which has cast a slur on the fair name of Bengal, both in and outside India. The Movement receives the treatment that it rightly deserves and is exposed in all its horridness and luridity. We are, of course, more concerned with it as a work of art than anything else.

In the introductory chapter, or more accurately speaking, in the prelude to the story, we come across Ela who is the

heroine of the novel. In the writer's own words, she is the herald of the new age. Other characters gradually come in—Indranath, Atin, the hero, camp-followers like Kanai, etc. Indranath was a scientist, but somehow or other he formed an antipathy for the ruling class. Yet he regarded the English as the best of the Western nations. He was of opinion that the Englishman was spoiling himself by bearing other people's burden. Indranath fretted against the stunted manhood of his country oppressed with servility. To be able to die like a hero was more to his taste. Yet he revelled in secret activities. Was this not an anomaly? He was the high-priest of the order of death and destruction. It is against that order that Rabindranath raises his voice of condemnation and he mercilessly lashes it.

Atin is a tragic figure. He is a failure in life. He was never a wholehearted anarchist. He wavered between a settled family life and a nomadic, uncertain existence. Atin regarded love as something barbarous and uncivilised but Ela would not marry him. She hesitated to drag him into the confusion of everyday life. She would rather have him as her ideal man than see him as an insignificant person in her daily life. In this hesitation of Ela there lay the tragedy of their lives. Atin revolted against what he regarded as the 'Car of the Juggernat of patriotic duty.' In this remark some critics have scented a gibe at some well-known political figure and a great national organisation. The poet or the thinker might not care for cheap popular applause, but when some thing or some one that stands high in the public estimation is concerned, it is wise to avoid any kind of misunderstanding. But probably Tagore was actuated by the idea that no great institution or no great man is above criticism.

The confederacy organised by Indranath disintegrated. Internal causes contributed to its decay and disruption. Atin was at the end of his tether. To the wretched hiding place where he was living as a rat in its trap came Ela, and the mess that they had made of their lives became apparent to them. Atin felt that his life had been in vain and that what was

regarded as nationalism and patriotism in his country was an utter negation of truth. The last meeting of these two who had always wanted each other, and whom nature had meant for one another, is extremely poignant. Atin confessed that he had committed the worst crime by stifling his own nature. 'Life is a forgerer, it wants to copy the handwriting of eternal time,' said he. The conclusion of the novel is tragic, no doubt, but the heroine, contrary to her usual self-confidence, is hysterical, thus revealing her weak woman's nature.

Considered from the artistic point of view, 'The Four Chapters' stands far above its two immediate predecessors—'Dui Bon' (The Two Sisters) and 'Malancha' (The Flower Garden). In 'The Four Chapters' there is practically no story element, the characters few in number,—a device that it shares in common with the two novels just mentioned,—the language is rhythmical, and there is a sense of compactness, a brevity in descriptions and an avoidance of all unnecessary details. Not being large in structure it is always constant in the reader's mind, and it satisfies the standard required of a complete and rounded work of art.

Mr. Bendre and His Poetry

By PROF. V. K. GOKAK, M.A.

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(4)

In the preceding sections,[1] I dealt with the poetical aspects of the modern Kannada Renaissance and presented the poetry of Mr. Bendre against a very picturesque background. I will now confine myself to an examination of the intrinsic qualities of his poetry.

In 'The song of the Unemployed' Bendre speaks of the relations of art to society:

Now that the world is chained in gold
Shall we not be quick and bold
To set it free? We will likewise
Bring away from paradise
The tree of plenty, bread and food,
And plant it here, aye, for good.
Till then all song's a cry, a dread:
'Bread! Give us our daily bread!'

There can be no real art till society is a fraternity, a brotherhood of emancipated and self-sufficing men. But there is also the relation of art to itself and to the self of man. He says elsewhere:

The river shall fountain forth
Born of the gestures of joy,—
The Milky Stream of radiant love
And faith none can destroy.

And in those holy waters
The soul a plunge will take,
And with conch-throated ease
Transcendent music make.

[1] The earlier sections were published in *Triveni* for July-Aug. 1934

It will build the world anew
With *Om* and with *Amen*
And with new oracles
Bless us indeed, poor men.

Ripeness in inward life and harmony and peace in the outward,—these are essential if great art is to flourish. It is fortunate for Kannada poetry that these ideals should be held high at the present time.

Bendre confesses, in 'The Song of Every Day,' that conception and expression change with the ages, adjusting themselves to new spiritual needs. But in his 'Four-fold Beauty' he tells us, after the manner of Kanakadasa of Karnataka and Sri Aurobindo, that Beauty, the ideal of all poets, can always be approached in one or the other of its four forms,—sensuous, imaginative, intellectual and spiritual.

This vision of Beauty in its four manifestations leads the poet very often to the altar of high aspiration. He yearns to attain the very peaks of Olympus, but is satisfied with his own place in the scheme of things, because all fractions lose their meaning when the integral factor is an Infinite Whole. Ambition knows no end. It is the Child dancing on the shoulders of Age in ceaseless progression.

Bendre starts with a clear sense of the necessity of objectivity in art. 'Leave my sufferings and my delights to me. But I will give you the poetry of my pain, the melody of my mirth. And if your heart melts at the strains like sugar-crystals, will you not permit me to taste its sweetness?' He tries to learn the lesson of comradeship in weal and woe and to realise the truth of the remark that the poet is the least poetical of all human beings. But he does not forget the fact that it is only out of the labours of the spirit that song can be fashioned. Poetry were but gossamer in air unless it is strengthened by seership. And in his quest after a newer life he falls back on Inspiration. He feels it in his heart that remembrance of *Prakruti* is his inspiration, and her image the theme of his song. In such inspired moments he finds the joy of it all descend on him in a flood. And he feels

that words can only profane his meaning. He is overwhelmed with the sight of sublimity in Nature. Standing on the banks of the Ganges he exclaims: 'How can ever one compose a song comprehending the river which even Siva's head could not *compose*?'

Coupled with this inexpressible joy of aesthetic experience is the delight he feels in the age-old traditions of Kannada poetry and in the innovations with which he and others are enriching them. It is self-expression in his mother-tongue alone that can quench the thirst of the poet. The poetic tradition of his Motherland must flow in his veins. And he reminds the Karnataka goddess of the fact that it was only yesterday that the Tungabhadra made the rocks blossom into domes and cupolas. Can she not once more minister the milk of paradise to the tongue that is lifeless?

All these strands of thought are gathered into one complex whole in the lyrical ode called 'Oh! Song.' It begins as a meditation on art and rises into the domain of supramental life. It is also a fulfilment of the very desire it voices forth. Here are the opening and the concluding stanzas:

Into the bright sky of my mind
A cloud its way doth gently find.
Enthroned on it is a maiden fair
And in tresses falls her hair.
With meaning looks of glad surmise,
Like twinkling stars, she beams surprise.
And like a tender lotus-bud
Half-opened in the morning's flood
Of light, her mouth she opens slow.
What songs, what chants from it would flow
To captivate the weary world?
I have come in sorrows hurled,
For your benison I long:
Give it me, oh Song! oh Song!

* * * *

As when a mother lulls to sleep
Her child when it doth wake and weep,
So did you ease my troubled mind

With ministrations gentle, kind.
And it was you who sang the strain
That echoed in my soul's domain
And lingers even now. All verse
Doth spring from you and I rehearse.
My tongue were but a nurse whose worth
Lies in waiting on your birth.
Could it be otherwise, oh Song!
Song! Oh! Song!

(5)

This is the poetry that Bendre has produced while tracking Inspiration on its way. I will now take to his other poems. A consideration of his plays, critiques and the forewords with which he has introduced most of the young poets of North Karnataka to the Kannada public, would overburden this article. I will now summarise the technical aspects of his poetry and then pass on to its substance and significance.

His style is rich and diverse. There is the imaginative wealth of his love-poems, the traditional idiom of his spiritual lyrics, the grandeur of classical style in the sonnets, the rhetorical fire of poems like 'The Stomach,' and the colloquial idiom of the pastoral lyrics. In a lyric like 'The Dance Eternal,' all these diverse currents meet in one great confluence. He uses certain age-old words with an appropriateness that brings them back to life. And in his use of *nal*, *tay*, *ta* etc., he has traced Kannada roots to their mystic essences as 'A. E.' has done with Sanskrit words in 'The Candle of Vision.'

His method of presentation results in intricate harmony. Almost every poem turns on some elaborate pattern of meaning as well as of language. And he has introduced many innovations. One is *Nalvari* or the four-fold lyric illustrated by 'Four-fold Beauty' and 'Young Ambition.' It consists of four stanzas in *Shatpadi* metre, each of them illustrating successively one of the four aspects of Beauty manifest in the theme. There are also lyric-sequences like 'Kama Kasturi'; and two long poems, 'Krishnakumari' and 'Moorti.' The

first has almost a labyrinthine design. And both illustrate the contention of Herbert Read that a long poem is essentially a complex harmony of many moods.

Perhaps the most interesting technical development in his recent poetry is the humorous variation he has played on 'Futurism' and 'Imagism.' Here is given the rendering of what can be called a 'featuristic' lyric. The lines in ordinary type are the real poem. In the italicised lines the poet himself has given us the interpretation of the movements:

IMAGE

Cheek resting on hand…………
(*The lover is out and away to a distant land!*)
The palm bent on the brow…………
(*Is he coming now by the palm-row?*)
Finger on chin………………
(*She finds at last the heart that hers did win!*)
Arms outspread……… …..
(*The severed halves do meet as one and wed!*)
Smiles and sobs……………
(*The warp and woof of love that ceaseless throbs!*)

It is not necessary to enumerate his metrical and stanzaic innovations in this connection. Most of the traditional metres are employed, but always with fine adjustments. And in his Miltonic sonnet on the Sonnet, he makes a point as remarkable as those found in Wordsworth and Rossetti ('A gay myrtle-leaf,' 'A moment's monument'): 'The eyes are indeed two; but the vision is always one.' There are certain radical changes introduced into the structure of the sonnet itself. Folk-tunes and balladic tunes find a place as well as the *ragas* employed in devotional lyrics. There is the fierce and unredeemed flight of poems like 'Behind a Corpse,' the powerful free verse of 'Narabali' and the poetic prose of 'Karulina Vachanagalu' and other prose-poems.

This music of his is the very delicate mansion of his lovely imagery. His muse is decked up in rainbow splendour. The imagery is cosmic, grotesque or delicate, as suits the content. Here is an instance of delicate imagery:

I have a longing all the while
To reach the haven of deep-blue skies
And lie down on the gossamer pile
Of pillowy clouds and quite despise
The very remembrance of pain
And be the being of bliss again !
Against the moon's I would lean my cheek
Though it be grown so wan, and seek
A similar paleness in his cheek.

This mastery over imagery is very often displayed over the extent of whole poems in creating the atmosphere suited to the dominant mood. And the mood, again, gets distilled into a symbol. As S. Krishna Sharma of Hyderabad has remarked, and as Prof. V. Seetharamia also pointed out independently, 'The realm of symbolism in Kannada poetry belongs peculiarly to Mr. Bendre.' His poetry is a storehouse of symbols. Literally every poem traces its theme to the root where it takes on a symbolic character. Allegory supports the symbolism in 'Moorti' and stands by itself in 'Mysore,' where Mr. D. V. Gundapppa, Prof. B. M. Srikanthia and 'Srinivasa' are referred to as Space, Wind and the Pole-star. But this is purely occasional. Whether inward or outward, life is always, in his eyes, a big procession of symbols.

I may just refer to some of the types of symbolism persistent in his poetry. Nature and love come in for a large share. 'The Butterfly' puts on the colour of temptation. 'Morning' becomes symbolic of peace. The reflection of one mirror in another and of each other's image in each other's eyes are images which symbolise infinity for the poet. He sometimes draws his symbols from the world of visions, as when his body itself becomes a tongue symbolising upward aspiration. In 'Sachidananda' and some other lyrics, he has contented himself with traditional symbolism.

Sometimes the process becomes cosmic as in 'The Bird of Time,' 'The Stomach,' 'The Dance Eternal,' 'Narabali,' 'The Sword of Life,' 'Blind Gold Is A-dancing,' 'Annavatara'

and 'Earth the Girlish Wife.' It were better to refer to 'Moorti' or 'Icon,' symbolic of the soul. The first part deals with the endless vistas opened by the Infinite Being and emphasises the lesson for the scientist that 'None ever beheld Truth; Truth is incomprehensible.' The second part describes the rock formation on earth and of that quarry out of which the Icon (named the Beautiful), the hero of the poem, is to be hewn. The third part reveals a monarch dreaming of a big temple with a lovely image enshrined in it. In the fourth, the artist sets forth in search of fine rock with instructions from the king and comes across the destined piece of stone. He chisels it into shape and the stone takes on the lineaments of his vision. He dies as his work is completed. In the fifth part, the Image is seen to be a many-faceted work of art, comprising all the nine *rasas* and more. It is set up in the temple. And in the sixth is described the far-famed glory of the Icon, how devotees gathered at its shrine from far and near and realised their dreams with the inspiration of their own aspirations. But in the seventh part the end draws near. Decadence has set in. The temple has become a market-place. The Image itself is buried in gold. And the priests are tyrannising in its name. The nautch-girls are there to lure the worshippers from the Image. And the inevitable end of it all sweeps over it in the eighth part. An iconoclast besieges the temple, drawn by the lure of gold, and shatters the Image to pieces. The dream of the monarch, the form shaped forth by the artist and the love lavished by worshippers, are all done into dust. And the poem closes with the famous utterance: '*Rasa* is *janana* or birth; *virasa* or the absence of it is *marana* or death; and *samarasa* or perfect harmony alone is life.'

It is apparent how very essential this symbolism is. The stone that becomes an image for a time and then relapses into its original shape, becomes a symbol of the soul and its passing pilgrimage through the world. It may also stand for a theory of art or a movement in art, commenting on its origin and growth, its relations to society and its inevitable

decay. Or it may signify the building and unbuilding of empires. One remembers the saying of Yeats that the meaning of a symbol can never be exhausted!

It is their capacity for silent and intense suffering that distinguishes his heroines. And in this capacity Mother Earth beats them all. There is Bharati, the mother of 33 crores of human beings and more, trying to learn her lesson at the feet of Earth. And there is Karnataka Devi, the Queen Cathleen of Bendre, needing sacrifice on the part of her children but asking for it only on demand. Then there are the women 'Sitting like Patience on a monument' in their domestic sphere: the mother who lost her suffering child while she slept and the unfortunate wife distracted with the indifference of her husband. Above all, there is the Rajput maiden, Krishnakumari, made to drink poison like Socrates, though it be for beauty, not truth. She revolts against her fate in the beginning. She passes through a bitter mood of cynicism and disillusionment. And she consents to her fate after having transcended the *trigunas*. She overcomes death by accepting it.

Bendre's heroes, on the other hand, are great aspirants who typify effort, the adamant hardness of the human will. Viswamitra who sits down to penance again after his affair with Menaka, the parrot that beats its wings ceaselessly in the void to secure a footing, the young volunteer of *Ahimsa Vrata* who, torn betwixt doubt and despair in prison, persists in his principle and is liberated the very next moment he is reconciled within himself,—all these have made up their mind, like Ulysses, 'To strive and not to yield.'

These are the pilgrims and seekers. But there are the victors of life belonging to either sex. If *Chinta,* Winter and *Shravana*, please or displease the human mind and play with it like Puck and Titania, there are the goddesses who deserve our worship—Shakti in her triple manifestation, Bhuvaneshwari who blessed Vidyaranya the empire-builder, and Ganga greater than any of the ten Incarnations, for she still favours humanity with her sacred presence. And there

are also heroes in different spheres of life: sages like Allama and Gandhi, militant seers like Agastya, Vidyaranya and Shradhananda, and poets like Ratnakara and Pampa the soldier-poet.

Perhaps the loveliest of all the symbols in Bendre's poetry is the smile of Buddha. We know little of the sculptor who conceived and presented Buddha with that faint flicker of a smile on his lips. But the poet knows what the sculptor meant and describes the smile thus:

'Tis but a likeness of the Dream Divine
Envisaged by the Peace of Buddha when
It sat in penance on the Everest
Of Buddha's Grief and glimpsed it in the cave
Of contemplation deep; the only blossom
That ev'r the tree of joy bore on its bosom.

Very rarely has the poet made himself the explicit theme of his song except in poems which were written to represent the crises in his life: 'Will,' 'Invocation to Intoxication,' 'Destiny' and 'Augur Well, Oh! Bird of Omen.' But friendship is one of his important themes. There are poems interpreting the inward life of friends and others in which he defines the spirit of friendship. A friend is a *leelavatari.* He would be mother and beloved to his soul-mate, praise him or scold him and make him flow in abundance:

Blest were this life indeed if once
A soul did blossom by its side.
What other immortality
For us can ever be descried?

This was the conviction which, later on, developed into the *Geleyara Gumpu.* But he also knows that inward ripeness was quite essential if one was to magnetise a group. And, above all, there is that isolation of spirit which makes man essentially a lonely pilgrim. He tells the parrot of his own soul:

Higher still and higher
As on thy way thou springest,
No friend nor fellow-traveller
With thee thou ever bringest.

And in 'The Lyric of Life' he tells us how the Idea comes riding in all its grace on Imagination, the bumble-bee, and forms and dissolves groups in wonderful succession, just to steal the spirit of man for further endeavour. And yet, to friends who complain of parting, he would say that no barriers can ever rise between souls which even lives could not lead astray.

But love is naturally a wider theme and affords large scope for dramatic study. In two lyric-sequences of pastoral love, he gives us the generalised expression of a complete experience of love in its normality. There is the first flush of love when the magnetic lady on the river-bank watches the needle-like stripling swimming in the river; or as when the youth is enamoured of the peacock of a royal smile riding high on the face of his beloved. The youth brings for his beloved an ear of sweet basil ('Kamakasturi') and would be satisfied even if she were to wear it in her hair and if he could catch the tale of its fragrance carried by a gentle gust of wind. He follows her, at a distance, when she goes to fill her pitcher in the lake. There is mutual love, agitation of heart, long waiting, vain remembrance, parting and regret. Then there is reunion, marriage, *samsara*. The young husband finds *Rati* in his beloved; there is perennial spring in her arms; her very touch is a fountain of joy; she is a veritable mine of precious children, the lady of his Dream. And so he sets sail in the pleasure-boat of marriage on the quixotic quest of domestic felicity. And what do the stars say? They assemble in the sky, as usual; and the night has a twinkle in its eye!

Then, as is inevitable, sets in disillusionment. He remembers in vain the smile that lit the proud face of his beloved when he met her by the river-side. Was it a dream that he saw the smile riding on a mirage? Was it a myth

that her smile flashed like the lightning glance of monsoons? Where *could* have vanished the lustre from her eyes, the radiance from her face, and the cherry-red ripeness from her lips? Her beauty has been baked in the oven of life, crucified on the altar of poverty.

Desperate and woebegone, the husband beseeches his beloved to forget her sorrow and smile for once, that he may do the same. Both wealth and poverty are evanescent. But the joy of heart endures for ever. Let her not lose this only oar in the sea of life. The beloved understands him and smiles indeed, but what a smile! She endeavours to bury her infinite sorrow in a smile. But the lover is too clever to be pleased. Is he fool enough not to see through this game? Can real sorrow be screened away by building the Taj over the tomb of the beloved? And thus drags on the tale of endless misery; so much so that love takes on the ghastly colour of the anarchic dance of Siva and Parvati in Kailasa and the soul sinks into a swoon, unnerved at the sight.

But then the poet suddenly gives up playing fiddler to sorrow and takes his cue from the Dance Eternal. Even the crow dances out of joy, though it owns not a single peacock-feather. Our dearest may die and our nearest may weep in misery. But what does it matter? The Dance is the thing. This life is a mere illusion, an inexplicable riddle, a going by the same door from which we came. Let us be at rest for once and turn our eyes within. Let us dance in reckless measure and outbid the winds in freedom. Let us entwine our arms, unite in embrace and whirl about in a dance royal like Spring's. Let us sway our heads as the serpent sways its hood, and move with the agility of lightning and the ecstacy of the potter's wheel.

And is this Dance all for man? No, says the poet. The hills will keep time with mad approval and the valleys resound with delight. Earth and ocean will take up the burden and throw themselves into the magnificent Dance. There is not a spot in creation where the Dance is not going on! Grassy lawns, standing lakes and star-sown skies,—all are a party to

it. The Dance knows no end save itself. And it is limitless. It is the only course left open to man. Why not dance, then, to the tune of days and nights? The orchestra of lives past will strike the chorus and Time will be the spectator. Life and death are annihilated. Earth has embraced the sky. Let us, then, dance like the waves of the immortal sea of joy! Let our bliss fountain forth to all the worlds living and yet to be.

In another poem the poet sees marriage as a period of spiritual probation for human souls. And the fact that two persons of different sexes should be made to cling to each other through life is in itself an object of intense wonder. The conflict between love and lust is, perhaps, one of the most momentous in life. The poet grapples with it in a series of poems entitled 'To——' and lays bare his conception of beauty in Woman.

But love is not only the sympathy which has its basis in sex. Man and Woman meet in manifold relations and these, in turn, open up the infinity of the spirit:

Unceasing fount of love! oh mother mine!
Oh sister! Home of peace and rest and love!
Ministering angel! that will starlike shine,
Gleaming with happy graces from above!
Belov'd! Incarnate Love! My star! my wife!
Daughter! Oh nursling of my heart and life!
When bare existence did my spirit wither
And life was all a starless, moonless gloom,
With healing hands of love you travelled hither
And made my wintry heart to burst in bloom.

When with my wandering mind, in this dull world
I roamed bewildered, stricken with dumb pain,
You came as Inspiration and unfurled
Your noblest visions, crooned your loving strain
Into my ears. Friend of the smiling moon!
To one in darkness, to the soul in swoon,
You came as Peace and Quiet; spreading free,
Oh! bright companion of my eager eyes!
The only ministration that could be
A coverlet of sleep ev'n as the skies!

In bounty of the spirit you became
The myriad waves of ocean : Kindliness,
Remembrance, Beauty, Hope and Love and Fame,
Patience, Affluence and Friendliness,
And rocked with them my heart that is a-tremble!
Woman! Immortal youth that doth resemble
Eternity! You free us from the thrall
That men call death and ev'n as Mother Earth
You spread your healing arms and bless us all:
I bring to you my song of little worth!

As in the image of a mirror found
Reflected in a mirror, as in eyes
That gaze on one another spirit-bound
And find in each their selves reflected rise,—
So doth Infinity attend our ways
And knit us two together all our days!
Yes! On the moonlight-loom of our own mind
Great Weaver, Love, eternally doth bend!
She twists our hearts as yarn and has designed
A cloth still woven and without an end!

Before I pass on to the next topic, I must just introduce the reader to the poet's skit on 'Modern Indescribable Beauty' in which he very cleverly plays off modern fashions against the ancient traditions of poetry:

Squint or blind, how can I stint
Myself to glorify the tint
Of your eyes when fast you wear
Of darkened spectacles a pair?

* * *

I may describe your pearly tooth
But are these teeth your own, forsooth?
I might well your cheeks have painted
Were they not with paint anointed!
As for your feet, they have undone
Either the poet or the sun
For when the shoes conceal your feet,—
Both of them must own defeat!

* * *

We poets cannot lend a shade
Of colour to your form, Oh maid!
When you have done yourself the paint,
All colour we devise is faint!

If love is all a mystery and a wild desire to the poet, the child is always an object of delight and wonder. There is a remarkable sequence of prose-poems expressing the love of a young mother for her child. She wonders at his closed fist and dreams that it may hold untold treasures in its grasp. She compares him to the ten Incarnations. He swims on the ground like Fish and tries to lift the skies with his face like the Boar! He is an *Ardhanariswara.* For, the kindness beaming in his eyes is reminiscent of herself; while his bold glance reminds her of her husband.

And what of Karnataka, the soil in which these children are to grow? The poet remembers the greatness of her past. Every stone in the land has a story to tell. And the ruins of Vijayanagara, the empire of this 'Land of goddesses,' stir him to his depths:

I stood before that land of great renown
Made one with dust by that wild dancer, Time,
In ghastly masquerade, who trampled down
The glory of its name and peerless prime:

Grey, ruined streets and ruined palaces
And ruined glory scattered in the dust,
I saw that home of long-forgotten graces,—
Some food to satisfy Time's heinous lust.

Is this a dream? Is this the broken heart
Of some high-hearted emperor exiled?
Of pageantries of clouds the fleeting art?
Or flower-offerings of charm beguiled?

Or is it some prostrating, sinful being
Bathed in repentant tears, weeping ov'r wrongs,
Low-lying at the feet of Heaven's King
When some new consciousness his grief prolongs?

This is no ruined realm but one to rise
And *Hampi*, dreaming ov'r it, is a sage
That seeks for inspiration to devise
A kingdom new; and when it comes of age,

Stainless and radiant it will endure:
Thus spoke my mind: but ov'r it rose my soul
And said: 'There hangs as yet a mist of lure
And doubt. A mystic riddle is this whole!'

Ev'n as a Master taking by the hand
A novice in the path of *karma*: 'See!
How *karma* degenerate doth often stand!
To righteousness eternal victory!'

To heights of glory this empire risen
By *dharma* and by *karma* so decayed,
Teacheth the lesson of a truth arisen
Out of its dreadful and time-haunted shade!

He speaks of her great poets and would believe that the time is ripe for a similar race of giants to be born in Karnataka. Her literary tradition is waiting in all its neglected grandeur for their coming. Even Nature is consecrated and conserves its beauties for the poets that are to come. This home of mango and jasmine is chosen, indeed, for some divine revelation! Make it once more, he says, the home of seers and prophets. And he sings the cradle-song of the Karnataka child, confident that it is dawn. He dedicates his own life to her service; his body is the pillar on which her mandates can be inscribed. And he calls upon the youths of the land to do the same. The Hero will appear when the people are ready to receive him.

The poet's vision of a Greater Karnataka transcends all barriers. In a sonnet he tells us that the Unification is deemed, at present, to be an impossible project. The Kannada mirror seems to have been shattered to pieces and scattered in all directions. Weeds have strangled the growth of this fair garden. The grandeur that was Karnataka seems now to be a romance turned to stone. And the Hand that can set

things right is invisible. But the innermost voice of the poet—contained in the sestet of the sonnet—revolts against such pessimism. The dust of the Kannada land may yet be raised on the Milky Way. The Universal Dance may yet be celebrated fittingly in Kannada and set on it the seal of universal renown!

'The Young Volunteer of Ahimsa Vrata,' 'Three And Thirty Crores,' 'Shradhananda' and 'Agastya' are some of the poems which express the stirring of depths that India has felt during recent years. The second poem is a great choric utterance and is the most thrilling of all. In the midst of a shoreless sea, Mother Earth is sitting meditating. Reclining on her lap is Bharati, leaning her face on her right palm. She sings the song of her own distress, gesticulating with her left hand. And countless creatures of various shapes are lying about her in numberless attitudes:

Are these my sons, oh! mother; these three and thirty
crores?
Three and thirty crores! And three and thirty crores!
Are all these my sons, mother, of my blood and bones?

Say, some are but worm and some blind and infirm,
And others are but sheep and sucklings yet asleep!
Yet manliness is a cipher if I try to decipher
This long account
Of no count:
Three and thirty crores!

Some of them are shattered and most of them are scattered!
Friends they are and brothers but they have their tethers
Of hatred and contempt which make them feel exempt from
speech
Each to each:
Three and thirty crores!

I have but reproduced two of the stanzas in the poem with the refrain. And yet the reader will easily see into its drift and choric design.

Brooding over the destiny of India, the poet is overwhelmed with a sense of her misery and turns his eyes to the

fabric of Society as a whole on earth. 'Beyond the Margin' presents a complete vision of social and domestic felicity. But it is no fool's paradise, within easy reach. The very foundations of society are laid on a strange universal law,—life feeding on life. Is there no other creative and self-protective process? The sons of Manu are being chased about on earth. Man has made a fool of himself by taking to war and its ways. War is nothing but a barbarous worship of 'Kali.' And yet this blood-thirsty goddess tramples Liberty under foot. She demands the price of death for Liberty, the birthright of humanity. Labour, again, knows no rest. 'The Song of the Unemployed' rises in tremendous chorus. The cry for daily bread almost becomes an invitation to chaos. 'Blind Gold is A-dancing' and trampling life under its heels. The Sea and Earth—man and wife as they are—are mourning over their dying son, the human soul, standing on each side. The ten Incarnations could not solve even the basic problem of food. And Anna-deva—the God of Food—has yet to put in his appearance! 'Annabrahma' or 'The stomach' is empty. 'Nadabrahma' or the heart is silent with anguish. The dome of 'Shabdabrahma' or the brain resounds with endless controversy. The human soul is tired with its suspension in the spider's web of good and evil. The rich are relentless though their barns are full. The gods are nectar-drunk. But the hungry man alone knows the pinch of hunger! Food has become more precious than life. Empty, dead-empty is the stomach of the poor:

> And the inmost voice of the poor
> Who are half-starved, ill-fed,
> Is surging, threatening and thundering
> As they are clamouring for bread:
> 'We'll bury God under the ground
> And watch His tomb on our nightly round!
> Set fire to creeds of men that rave,
> To burn as incense on His grave.
> We'll swing the soul into death-knells
> And follow them with shrieks and yells.

Stung into madness by death-dearth,
We'll make a morsel of this earth ! '

This meditation on the world-situation draws the poet into a mood of holy dread in a poem called 'Rudra Veena':

I know not why
As days go by
Loud wails the *Rudra* lute
As the soul communes
With its own runes
It sounds and nev'r is mute.

The chords flash,—tremble in splendour ;
And creaks and crashes in thunder
The voice. And sweeping, oh ! wonder !
The fingers vanish in the sky !
Hairy planets arise.
The planets swim in the skies.
And sun and moon devise
Strange light as Time goes by.

Earth's volcanic again,
The mountains split amain,
And the dykes dam streams in vain
As they slake the red soil.
The seat of justice upturns
And the thrones of kings are urns
And caste and creed returns
Behind the mind's turmoil.

Men and women groan
Labouring and bemoan
The fate that'll be their own
In coming days.
Loth are they to change
But a New Life doth range
Abroad and will estrange
Them from their ways.

If the poet finds thus in Society a state of chaos which is but an intermittent stage in the evolution of humanity, Nature is for him a dome of many-coloured glass, a pageantry of

splendour. There are charming and familiar descriptions of the *parijata* flower, the bee-hive and the millet-leaf. He sees a dam and exclaims that, like a man of the world, it is levying the toll on the goods (waters) coming from the wild! Nature, is also a background for different themes as in 'Rodana' and 'Ragarati.' But the general process is that of symbolism illustrated already in the preceding section. There is sometimes the motive of contrast, as in 'New Year's Day.' The new year makes everything new but ourselves! Could we but die and resurrect ourselves every day even as we sleep and awaken! Further on, as already referred to, the poet detects lovely mythical existences in Nature: Winter and Sravana, the truant boy who laughs and weeps. Above all, Nature takes on a cosmic beauty in poems like 'The Bird of Time,' 'The Dance Eternal' and 'Earth the Girlish Wife.' In the last he expresses his belief that earth herself will give birth to divinity.

(6)

The intellect may be able to detect problems. But it will not always be able to solve them. It is only in an emotional apprehension of life that all its glories are revealed to man. Many a time has the poet harped on this cult of Beauty in his poems. For joy is the mystery behind creation. Grasp the secret of joy and you will understand God Himself!

And yet the world, sprung from Light, is full of darkness! That is the greatest riddle of all. How could ever joy give birth to Evil? This is the question writ large on the Vedas and on the brows of suffering humanity. The poet tells us in a sonnet how, as a child, he used to play day-long in the streets. His elders would fish him out and take him home to meals at night fall. He would sit in the darkened kitchen, glance up at the chimney that let in a faint streak of light and ask his mother: 'Light was here and everywhere. Whence, then, this darkness that fills the world?' The utterance gains a stabbing irony in retrospective narration.

That is how life becomes a spiritual art. Time and

Destiny, Sorrow and Bereavement, make of life a mystery-play which God alone can understand. And he would be the Hero who wields 'The Sword of Life' like a true swordsman. And here enters the poet's faith in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. Man is the master and not the servant of life. The soul is the radiant daughter of earth blessed with the love of her mother. And death is only a portal unto brighter birth. The earth is destined to be heaven itself and humanity is only a step towards divinity. The seers like Aurobindo help the Cosmic Evolution by awakening its consciousness in many minds.

But what is to be done in the meanwhile? To receive both good and evil at God's hands with grace:

Never before nor ever after,
Not in the breathing present
Can I admit injustice in Thy scheme.
What comes to my lot
Is just what Thou hast wrought
And the one that I have sought,—
Thy justice supreme.

Well it is if I can know it.
Nor is it worse if I know it not.
I will peer to glimpse it with all my might.
'Tis well for me if I exist
And 'tis well for me if I come to nought
For it is Thou who brought'st me to birth,
Oh! Master of Light!

I watch Thy doings and wait
To see that which may come to pass,
Thy witness to be.
Oh! Knowledge in Essence!
That I may comprehend the same
I submit my very instruments
Of knowledge to Thee.

I do not insist on Thy doing it.
Do or undo as Thou willest.
I leave it to Thee.
I am silent in my faith

That, whatev'r Thy deed, Thou art my friend indeed!
Thou art the doer and Thine the deed!
Give me the power to bear and be.

To please God with the life we lead; to live a life of perfect harmony; to forget our own sorrow and lessen that of others; to find compensation in the beauty of the Living Present, of Life and Nature and the dreams of youth; to accost pain which disciplines us into joy; to enter into the lives of others and expand our personality; to adventure into new worlds and never own defeat; to explore life in all its phases; and to dance the Dance Eternal,—that is the burden of the poet's song, the drift of his utterance that is gathering volume and grandeur. God is the great Ploughman and we are the plough and the hoe in His hands. Let us pray to Him from the depths of our own hearts. We can even take up life as Play ('Leela'):

Straying clouds in shower fling
Dew-drops shaken from their wing
And now the sun is shining free
And smiling clouds reflect his glee.

Beneath the roof of golden rays
The little children have their plays.
Their magic touch turns into gold
Every heap of earth they fold.

They build their sparrows' nests with mirth
While those they built fall to the earth :—
Not vain their fall! Their ruins yield
Fresh earth with which new nests to build.

Oh! I will yoke Mind's lightning-car
To summer-steeds that glowing are
Like visions fleeting; make them fleet
To some far quarterless retreat!

With burnished arrows I will fill,—
Arrows of new thought that will
Be glittering star-like in the skies,—
My scabbard, store of new surprise!

And numberless do cities grow
In every quarter. I'll throw
My shafts in showers without aim,—
A hit or miss, 'tis all the same !

For what they hit or where they go,
Oh ! never can I care to know !
No arrow from its goal can stray ;
Nothing is wasted in a play !

I must now take leave of the reader. For, though nothing is wasted in play, space may as well be spared in the *Triveni* for better or similar purposes. I have liked these poems and their author. Nay, I have undoubtedly loved them. And I am sure that the reader will like them too. I have kept myself sedulously away from these later pages in order to enable him to see things for himself. The only other question which I may be asked, now that I am pilloried, is: 'What about the defects of your poet? Is he so faultless that you hold your tongue and are silent?' It would be too presumptuous on my part to answer saying, 'Judge for yourself!' Every poet has his pets. And his pets are most likely to be his defects,—for he does not turn them inside out. The unceremonious style of some of his early poems, the infernal love of rhymes which besets them now and then and strangles them with too many sweets, (This is to be taken with caution; for, as Humbert Wolfe says, rhyme is hardly a less glorious invention than that of fire !), the fondness for puns, (A very wicked habit, for once you get into it, you will never get out of it), and the like are all that I can find. And the later poems are free even from these. The only indictment to which some of these have been subjected is their obscurity,—a charge which the undiscerning level against all good poetry.

'Srinivasa' (Masti Venkatesa Iyengar) came out with a fine collection of sonnets some time back ; its two most notable features being, in my opinion, an oracular confidence of thought and a miraculous ease of expression. This radiant personality stands out in the sequence as a whole, not so

much in the individual pieces themselves. He distributed rewards and punishments and confessed his likes and dislikes in the most majestic manner; and we all felt that it was the most natural thing in the world for him to do. And Bendre also came in for his turn. 'Srinivasa' praised the rain-bow vesture of his verse; referred to him as a wizard; and called him a snake-charmer who would expose the harm of Evil to the people. Bendre could as well have pocketed these compliments and quietly slept over them. But he returned the compliment in a sonnet, saying:

'Mine is an imperfect vision; yours has the perfection suggestive of infinity.'

His imperfect vision may contain many perfections. But the fact that it is imperfect is the crux of the matter. Here is a great promise. Its fulfilment lies in the lap of the gods.

To the Washerman's Donkey

O tragic comrade, dusky grey!
Of whom so few have truly sung,
Believe me, I respect your bray,
Your heaven-cleaving mother-tongue.

I long to know the thoughts you think,
For you can think if mortals can,—
Sad contrast to the gaudy pink
Turban of your grim washerman!

I know your wretchedness, your grief,
And knowing it mine own hath ceased.
But how shall I impart relief
To you, O poor exploited beast?

When I behold your master's whip
And hear it on your body crack
I seem to feel the warm blood drip
And trickle right across my back.

I seem to have become a part
Of all exploited things like you;
My heart goes beating to your heart
And every beat rings clear and true.

With you I toil and trudge and keep
Incessant pace, being equal-hired,
But, brother! soon we both shall sleep
For God knows, we are very tired!

Vikarabad, 30th Sept. '31. H. CHATTOPADHYAYA

The Idyll of Ecard[1]

By CHANDRAPAL

This legend I have heard told so often by the village folk living in the outskirts of Tiruvallur; and yet I have had great difficulty in piecing this together into a continuous, consistent and credible narrative; for, while in all the different accounts I have received there was not any considerable discrepancy as to the ending of the idyll, they were all slipshod and vague as to the events, not to say the details, of the lives of the protagonists, individually and together. So indifferent were those who told me this tale as to all such details, and in such a flustered and impatient manner did they hurry and gloss over them, that it gave me the impression that they looked upon them not merely as irrelevant and insignificant but also as decidedly the kind of things one did not talk about. Consequently the different accounts were rather varied, and the differences they presented to me so very irreconcilable.

I have tried to give the tale a form and a sequence, and to embellish it to the best of my ability with a description of the place, from what it is now, as it must have been in the days when this tale is said to have happened. But I am only too aware of how far it falls short of the power and impressiveness that it had when it was told to a gaping audience with all the intense solemnity and authority of a religious recital.

* * * *

On one of the little rocks which seemed to be stranded in the midst of the scraggy, scanty pasturage a cowherd of about seventeen years of age was sitting, statuesque in immobility, with his back to the sun. It was high time for him to call the cattle home. But he did not move. He was crouching on his crook, pressing it to the ground with his left hand and resting his right elbow on it. His right cheek was thrust upward by his right palm and consequently his mouth

[1] Pronounced 'Eecard'

aiso was drawn upward to that side. The sun was descending slowly, very slowly, as if gathering momentum for its final plunge down, beyond the distant cluster of cocoanut palms. It was, as it were, grinning with malicious pleasure behind his back; and every moment its grin was growing broader and broader. Presently, unable to contain its mirth, and afraid of giving offence, it would hide its face behind those distant palms. But he heeded it not. . . .

He was looking with listless eyes at the panorama that spread before him. His eyes strayed homeward to the village of Tiruvallur with its low thatch-roofed houses and the newly built temple which seemed to him to be brooding in the midst of the village like a woebegone shepherd in the midst of his reclining flock; to the yellow terraces of the local potentate's abode at the other side of the village; to the highway which, in spite of its huge trees at regular intervals and narrow ditches black with sewage on either side of it, looked more like a beaten track than a road, because two deep and ugly ruts, along which myriads of bullock carts had plied up and down, ran through it. He contemplated the highway leading up from the village through the fields, its sweeping bend leading straight up to some distance from where he was sitting, and its winding, undulating way through Ecard, the rugged and uneven tract of land with its scrappy vegetation and its straggling trees. A far-away look came into his eyes as though he were striving to follow the winding process of the road beyond. . . .

His thoughts were far away—back in the halcyon days in the pleasant pasture-lands high up on the Kaveri. With tantalising vividness his eyes beheld a girl with sheeny black hair flowing down to her hips, with wide and sparkling dark eyes, with lips ever parted in a dazzling smile. She was short and slim. Her complexion was a lustrous dark brown and her features were fine and well cut, though not regular, and in perfect proportion. She was standing with her hands on her hips, her head thrown back and her nose tilted up provokingly. . . .

'Amaravathi!' He had breathed her name involuntarily, and he was startled by his own voice.

Amaravathi!—Free as the air in her movements; as frolicsome as any of the lambs, and as tender of heart as any of the ewes, which she tended. Amaravathi with whom he had played in childhood in front of their huts, played at tending sheep and at bull-fighting; with whom he had quarrelled too, occasionally. Amaravathi who was always glad to meet him in the meadows when they were tending their sheep; and, when they grew up, the only individual to whom he confided all his failings and pretensions, his hopes and fears. Amaravathi to whom he went for sympathy in affliction; and with whom he was always glad to share his joys. Amaravathi whom he was always glad to help out of any trouble. Amaravathi who sometimes looked up to him as to a father, and sometimes comforted and cheered him as a mother would a child. Amaravathi who . . .

And the tears stood in his eyes. The whole panorama became blurred to his vision, and faded out altogether. Instead, he saw the fresh green meadows by the Kaveri, with here and there a copse, and here and there a wide carpet of flowers, and the cool vistas of golden paddy fields spreading out far and wide on all sides. The smell of fresh verdure, of the flowers and of the sheep, made his nostrils tingle. He heard the bleating of the sheep; and, in between, the almost imperceptibly gentle lapping of the wavelets of the river against the bank and the faint but incisive soughing of the wind in the grove of mango trees on the other side of the river. But above all, a shriller and sweeter cry from the distance drummed against his ears and sent a thrill through his whole being—the piercing, almost primeval, 'Hoy' of his beloved playmate from across the meadows . . .

The lowing of the cows he tended brought him back to sad reality. They were moving about restlessly, wanting to be taken home so that they may feed their young and be milked, and lie down and ruminate and sleep. In the intensity of their yearnings and their despair they stood hushed

and immobile for a spell. The sun had set a while before, and the stars were peeping out one by one. There was an unearthly silence around him. It was as if Silence were there as a living presence—a presence that could be felt.

He looked intently at a star just above the horizon in the south-east which was twinkling away with all its might . . It was winking at him. It was! What right had it to gloat over his misery to his face? . . .

Amaravathi was running towards him, like a blackbird skimming over the field, for succour from a chasing bull. How proud he was to support her terrified, clinging form trembling and sweating against his—to brandish his crook heroically above his head. He felt as if he was Krishna himself. He would not give that fleeting moment to be king of all the world. He would gladly die if the bull tore him to pieces then and there. But the bull beat an undignified retreat, though it tried to cover its loss of dignity by walking away slowly and nonchalantly. She looked all her thanks in her sparkling eyes and in her parted lips . . .

He thought, with a wistfulness which swelled into an oppressive and painful contemplation, of the calm, pleasant tenor of their lives in the little secluded village on the Kaveri; of their homes, low huts huddled together like sheep in a spread-out grove of cocoanut palms. He remembered the moonlight nights when he and she had played among the feathery shadows of the palms which seemed to dance on the sands bathed in moonlight; or had wandered by themselves when the shadows were still, with a faint suggestion of trembling, as if they were the reflection of the trees in some strange liquid surface of pale yellow.

He would lie awake of nights, outside his home, on a mat woven of cocoanut leaves with a low flat stool of wood for pillow, staring at the palms standing motionless in the still night in the mellow light of the moon, or on moonless nights silhouetted darkly against the inky, star-studded sky; and would wallow in a very vague and hazy reflection in which he would look upon them as souls stranded in the midst of life,

brooding vacantly over the purpose of their existence. Suddenly there would be a fleeting rustle ; as if they were disturbed in their reverie, they would shake their heads petulantly, but ever so slightly and lazily, and then they would drop into their still brooding again.

The cocoanut palm, being of all trees nearest to the human in shape by virtue of its distinct shaggy head, has always tempted man to project on to it his own vacant and futile speculations about life ; and as ages and ages ago man pondered over the mystery of life, he does now, and will do till eternity. Even as a child he had been incited, by the strange insistence of the sight of the still and brooding palms, to wonder about the meaning and aim of life. But he had speculated with a child's mind, a mind bright and flitting and gay like a butterfly, with the eager wonder which a child feels when it first sets eyes on a pleasant sight ; and not with the sense of emptiness and futility which neurotic elders try feverishly to camouflage to themselves and to others by creating and fondly believing in the most outrageously fantastic myths.

Those palms had played a distinct part in the thoughts of the two of them. They were conversant with all their ways and whims. And when they had left the little village for good and had come to Ecard, they had recollected them as often and as vividly and with as much pleasure as the good people they had left behind.

The soothing rustling of the palms, their intermittent and rhythmic swaying, along with the soft cool breeze they wafted about and their occasional outbursts as of laughter, when of a night the two of them were resting after the labours of the day, was such a contribution to the pleasant and cheerful ruminating and desultory chat they had indulged in by themselves in imitation of their elders. The palms were pleasant companions on moonlight nights, and fearful ominous ghosts on dark nights at which even the dogs would bark incessantly! On stormy nights they would sway and dance in the dark like possessed women, with their hair flowing wild ; and curled up snugly in their beds inside their

different huts, each would fearfully listen to them moaning and whining like women in travail.

The tears trickled silently down his cheeks as he thought of how all that had suddenly ended. Foraging hordes from the neighbouring enemy kingdom had swooped down upon them, like a kite swooping down on a blithe and innocent little chicken,—unexpectedly and as if from nowhere. They had had to fly overnight for their lives. And they had come and settled in this Ecard—so bleak and eerie—but at first so grand and wonderful.

It was here they had first become painfully conscious of the cruelty of man to man, of creature to its kind, of one species to another; of the sinister, secret strife that, in this world, goes hand in hand with the sheer zest in life. And they would sorrow and fear for the world and for themselves. It was Ecard which first intoxicated them, when they were alone of an evening in its midst, with the glorious illusion that only the two of them did exist in all that dark and vast universe. And the next moment it would crush them with the humiliating revelation that they were puny mites of no account in all the immensity of this world and the other worlds which peered at it from beyond through holes in the dark blue sky . . .

He worked as cowherd to all the cow-owners in the village; and she watered the young mango plants in the large grove near the village and collected cotton in the cotton fields in the evenings for her living. They could not meet very often . . .

But how dear were those meetings because so few; how sweet it was to wait for and dream of a meeting before it came about; and how sweet it was to sleep on the memory of it after it was over. His eyes would close, but her face, with parted lips and dancing eyes, would stand before him, and her sweet voice would keep singing in his heart . . .

Wave after wave of tender recollection of those glorious days when first they came to Ecard surged through his brain. They would sometimes meet after sunset, when their labours

were over, and walk side by side along the lonely highway or stray into the groves or the fields or to the ponds in an eager search for the wonders and vagaries of Ecard.

He remembered vividly their first walk together along the very road he had been listlessly looking at sometime before. Ah! he could remember . . . It was a beautiful moonlit night. Even the dusty uneven road with the two ugly gashes running along its length was beautiful to behold and pleasant to walk along. For a stretch, the road ran through a little wood,—trees of various kinds growing wild together, wood-apple, margosa and guava, and on the sides of the road itself, the stately king trees with an occasional banyan or 'asoka.' The moonlight breaking through the foliage was so bright and the shadows so intensely dark and clearly outlined that the road looked like a clumsily spread carpet of curious, varied and weird designs in silver on a dark ground. The moon itself could only be seen through chance openings among the leaves and branches. But the play of moonlight among the gently swaying branches and the rustling leaves was most wonderful and pleasant to watch. From all around came the smell of fresh blossoms, of strange flowers they had not known before. And the ponds which were visible in chinks and patches gleamed like sparkling diamonds and shining sheets of gold. Their surroundings, in their entirety and in every detail, were so fantastically beautiful, that they just could not accept the fact that they were in this world, that they were walking along an ugly old track in the midst of a dreary and bizarre expanse. The illusion that they were wandering in another world, a strangely beautiful world, was so very incisive and enticing in its sweetness. And to heighten the illusion, to their infinite joy, when they came up to where the road ran through open country, the whole scraggy rugged tract of land, with its straggling trees and its few marshy ponds scattered far and near, was so transformed by the shadows and highlights cast by the moon that it seemed to have been metamorphosed by some magic spell into a cool and entrancingly beautiful landscape.

They had walked on in a trance, enraptured by an emotion which was an inextricable tangle of their emotional response to the beauty, mystery and grandeur of their surroundings and of their pleasure in relishing it together. And suddenly they had been startled by the consciousness of something queer. They had looked up impulsively to the left of the road to see the moon, and, not finding it there, they had looked about with a start and had found it shining at them from the right. (He seemed to be actually standing there on that moonlit road with Amaravathi beside him, looking wonderingly at the moon). At first they could not believe their eyes. They decided they had been dreaming, and had absent-mindedly thought it was to the left while it was actually to the right. Or was the moon playing hide-and-seek with them, and laughing at their perplexity? It looked like it! The moon was beaming at them with a mischievously broad grin. They had suddenly looked back of one accord, as if the clue lay with somebody behind their backs who was in the confidence of the moon, and to whom the moon seemed to have given a sly and knowing wink. And they had found that the road they had come along had made a grand sweeping bend, and that the moon seeming to have jumped of a sudden to their right was no mystery at all. This discovery gave them a delicious thrill. . . . They had always cherished the memory of that incident. And ever after, when they looked at the moon their hearts would fill with gladness. They would remember that incident, and look upon the moon as a playfellow, almost expecting it the next moment to efface itself and to laugh mockingly at them, appearing behind their backs. . . .

A bat, vividly dark even in the enveloping darkness, flew past him so near his head and so silently, that it startled him out of his reverie. To his feverish imagination it seemed a stray spirit from the nether world, a harbinger of death. . . .

She had been with him then; and every new experience brought him gladness and joy and nothing else. . . .

And the snakes! Ah, the snakes! They had often been

warned solemnly by the inhabitants of the place to be wary of snakes,—to talk loudly and walk noisily in the dark so that the snakes may be warned of their approach and take themselves off. They would remind themselves of these well-meant injunctions, only to forget them the next instant in their pleasant preoccupations. How glad he was when a snake crossed their path,—and snakes were plentiful. Her startled shriek was music in his ears; her frightened clutching of his arm, an experience the relish of which would not die for days. But even more dear was Amaravathi's shame-faced laughing at her involuntary jumping up and screaming. And she would try to justify her action, smiling all the while, on the score that she'd only been startled, and was not at all afraid. 'Of course. You'd only been startled,' he would say laughing. . . . He was startled to find himself speaking the same words out aloud. . . .

A sudden, long-drawn-out wail pierced the stillness. It went deep into his heart and seemed to become a solid lump inside. It turned into the gasping, half-strangled groan of someone being strangled to death. Then it changed to the hideous, heartless laugh of the murderer at his victim's last hoarse and frantic cry for help. It was a hyena. . . .

It put him in mind that the whole of Ecard was swarming with the spirits of people who had died premature deaths; people who had been murdered in these lonesome parts; people who had been drowned or had drowned themselves in the marshy ponds; people who had died of epidemics (or, according to the villagers, people who had perished under the wrath of the goddess of small-pox or of cholera). . . .

He remembered the day both of them had walked along the road branching out near an old margosa tree, and leading to the cremation ground and to another village beyond. They had walked along the dark deserted track, and had been struck with wonder when, turning a sharp bend, they saw before them, instead of a huge banyan tree which they had often seen from afar in daylight, a spreading firmament of brilliant twinkling stars. It was so marvellous and beautiful to look

at, that they had stood transfixed to the spot, gazing with glad, wondering eyes at the sight. Then they had drawn near and had found that it was only an enormous swarm of fireflies disporting themselves amidst the foliage of the banyan tree. And, absolutely oblivious of the lateness of the hour and the curious rustlings and swishings which they had heard intermittently, they had gazed up spell-bound at the glorious sight, their hearts swelling with pleasure. And all the way back home they had turned round from time to time to look at the tree scintillating with myriads and myriads of tiny, twinkling lights, indulging the while in the self-satisfying thought that they alone among human beings had been privileged to enjoy that most bewitchingly beautiful and gladdening of sights.

The next day, they were told in the village that the big banyan tree was always at night swarming over with myriads of fireflies ; and also (in hushed and awe-inspiring voices) that it was a terribly ghost-haunted place. There were, they said, almost as many ghosts haunting that tree as there were fireflies. And Amaravathi had shuddered. And when they remembered the curious rustlings and swishings, she had shuddered the more. And she would never again be persuaded to go to that place in the evenings. He had tried every manner of persuasion. He had told her it was all nonsense. That there were no such things as ghosts. That he was not afraid of them at all, if they did exist. And what had she to fear when he was by her side, to protect her from the slightest harm ? But she would just shudder and shudder at the thought of the ghosts and refuse flatly. After a time he had persuaded her to go over to see, at least from a distance, the little firmament of sparkling fireflies. She had yielded solely for the pleasure of seeing the beautiful sight, though she would stand there trembling by his side, and would drag him away soon . . .

Amaravathi believed in ghosts and spirits and such things. He could not. It was all silly. Though everybody else believed in them too. It *was* absurd. How could there be spirits . . .

A pack of jackals began to howl in the distance. The howling approached nearer and nearer, and swelled up in volume. A shudder ran through his frame. He had heard them howling at greater proximity before, and he was not afraid of jackals at all. But now it made his blood run cold. He did not believe in spirits at all; but a fancy struck him that they were spirits from the nether world, and were coming with war-cry and wail to fetch him. The fancy possessed him and became a menacing reality to his fevered imagination. They were coming, coming,—those spirits. At one time their cry was a sad mournful wail, and at another a blood-thirsty, fierce and triumphant war-cry. He perspired all over and shook with spasms of shivering. But the cry receded farther and farther and died in the distance, suddenly landing him with its cessation in the rainy season in Ecard when Amaravathi was with him.

Ah! those were memorable days. . . .

The sun's rays, as if they were white hot swords, would sear the land from east to west. Day after day, day after day, they would sear the land. Till the land wilted and groaned, gasped for breath, and finally gave up its ghost in despair. The ponds would dry up, exposing their beds, which would seem much like the human skin corroded and broken up by virulent skin-disease, to dry and fester under the scorching sun. Most of the shrubs and plants and a few of the trees would become like dried up specimens of themselves. The ripening corn would droop and lay itself down to dry up and forget that ever the sap had coursed through its veins. And all live conscious beings would think and dream of nothing but rain, rain, rain. They would find themselves forced to face the terrible possibility that the monsoon had forgotten its yearly duty by them. Men and women would begin to joke and to fear that the monsoon had either forgotten its duty, or had mysteriously passed by them, or was no more. And at last! At last the monsoon would come upon them accompanied by thunder and lightning. Lightning in blinding flashes; and thunder which gave them the awesome impres-

sion of huge rocks rolling down rugged slopes or clashing down precipices amongst the mountainous clouds right over their heads. And the rains would pour down in torrents, and the winds. . . .

The dry ponds would fill over and break their banks and overflow; every shallow would become a puddle and every ditch a gurgling muddy stream. How many times they had stepped into the mire which spread far around every pond and had extricated themselves with difficulty, the filthy mud clinging slimily half-way up to their knees. How many times, walking dreamily about, they had inadvertently walked into a puddle.

Then there was the eternal croaking of the frogs. All the frogs in all the ponds would join in conclave and croak and croak and croak,—croaking their throats out as if they were sending up a plaint to heaven pleading for rain and more rain.

He woke up from the trance with startling suddenness, and was still more startled to hear the deep croak of one of those old bull frogs. It was the deep, long-drawn-out 'moo-a-a' of one of his cows from afar crying for its calf.

An owl screeched from somewhere. But in his dazed mind he could not decide whether it was the screeching of an owl or the screeching of Amaravathi, for it appeared so much like her startled screech when, as they were playing on the banks of the Kaveri, she stepped on some harmless crawler.

But how soon it had all ended! She had run up to the next village one evening on an errand for her mother. She was to have returned at dusk. It was long since dusk had set in, and her mother's anxiety had turned to a consternation which gripped her heart. And, trembling with fearful foreboding, the poor mother had walked up to the next village, and there she had been told that her daughter had left a good while ago. The mother had walked back home, her heart limp and heavy in her, despairingly crying Amaravathi's name every now and then. She had hurried home buoyed

up by the fond hope which swelled up in her, that Amaravathi might have returned home when she had been away. But Amaravathi was not at home. And all the villagers had set out in the darkness to search for her. They had searched and searched; but she was nowhere to be found. He had been among the van of the searching party, and he had run about madly here and there. How he had run about! He had been like a wounded animal running it knows not whither. He could not think. He was speechless and wild eyed. He did not then or after know what exactly his feelings were at that time. But now he lived the whole experience over again in all its intensity. The same incomprehensible, frantic dazedness came over him. He just could not think anything. He could not comprehend it at all. His Amaravathi, his beloved companion! Where could she be? Where!

They had never found her. Ecard—gloomy, weird and mysterious—had gobbled her up and looked as glum and bleak as ever.

His parents had noticed his distraction, and on the insistent advice of the other folk who had also noticed it, had considerately sent him away to the far south to serve under a flourishing cattle broker.

Now, after a year, he had returned; and his family was prosperous. Wherein lay the prosperity? *She* was no more. How bleak and gloomy looked Ecard! What malice was on its face! Why, it looked like the face of the Devil itself. It was a habitation of malignant spirits; not a fit dwelling place for man. Why, why had they come to this Ecard?

A faint sigh rose up from afar and drew near, a long-drawn-out sigh of pent-up agony that swelled in emotion as it drew nearer and nearer. It was the wind stirring among the distant palms. A vague chillness clutched at his heart.

There was a spell of stillness. And the sigh rose up again, greater and more intense than before. And approached gathering in force. It sounded like a faint moan, turned to a soft wail.

They are coming, he thought, the spirits,—in battalions,

in hordes of thousands and tens of thousands. The wail rose and fell; and ended in a deafening, prolonged shriek. Discordant noises rent the air,—thundering and booming noises; cries of rage and fury and of excruciating pain; dying groans, cries for mercy, shrieks of women, wail of children,—all sorts of noises impinged on his ears from all around him. The trees knocked against each other like giants lashing each other with their gigantic arms. Their cries of pain and of triumph and their heartrending roars when giving up their ghosts filled the air. As in a thick and furious battle, the demons were fighting in the darkness, each against the others around, without distinguishing friend from foe. The battle was devilish in fury.

Clearly, above all this pandemonium, he heard a distinct cry, 'Come to me! Come to me!'

'What's this I hear? Who's calling? Amaravathi! My Amaravathi! Is that you?'

'Yes. It is your Amaravathi, your own Amaravathi.'

'Amaravathi!'

She was in his arms and sobbing as if her heart would break.

'Don't cry, Amaravathi. It's all right. We shall never part again. Don't cry. I can't bear to see you cry. We shall never part! Shall we?'

And she cheered up and smiled. That old open smile of hers,—in which the lips would part, showing the pearly white teeth and would never meet again—and her eyes shone bright even in the darkness. She took his hand in hers, pressed it and said softly, 'Come with me!'

And the next moment he was walking with his hand in hers, never stopping, nor stumbling, nor tripping. The darkness, as if it were a living personality, hovered about them and oppressed them on every side. But he did not at all mind the darkness, for Amaravathi was with him. The wind blew their clothes furiously about. The trees and shrubs extended hungry ravenous arms in the dark to clutch him, moaning and raving all the while. His feet were caught by

the spirits fallen in the fray, spirits which crept like snakes and twined round his legs and pulled him. His feet bled. But what did he care! His clothes were caught and torn by those devilish arms in the dark, and his skin was scratched by sharp claws. But he did not heed anything. Amaravathi's hand was in his. He was not afraid of the furious demons. He was with Amaravathi. That was what he wanted. *Nothing else mattered.*

He was going . . . Going he knew not whither. . . . But what did he care so long as Amaravathi was with him! He smelt the filthy stench of the mire around the ponds, but the fragrance of the fresh flowers in Amaravathi's hair was more insistent. His feet brushed against the sharp edged weeds . . . But what did he care! Amaravathi's hands were soft and cool. . . .

The wind stopped with mysterious suddenness. A faint lurid glow was in the sky. He was bewildered by the consciousness of being on the slushy bank of a pond with Amaravathi by his side. Sweet, dear old Amaravathi, she was with him again. She pressed close to him and put her arm round his waist. He put his arm around her and held her as if he would never let her go.

'Come,' she said softly, and gently pulled him forward. . . . They both fell into the water. . . . Water all around. . . . They were going down, down. Water all above. . . . They were still going down, down. He did not shriek or struggle. Amaravathi was with him. That was all he cared for. His feet struck the bed of the pond, and was caught in a tangled root or something. What if? . . . He was lying flat on the bed. . . . Amaravathi had placed his head on her lap. 'Amaravathi, my own Amaravathi. . . . I feel so sleepy, so sleepy. . . . let me sleep on your lap for a while. . . . if only I could sleep on your lap for ever.'

'Sleep, my beloved, sleep. You shall sleep in my lap for ever. And I shall sing you to sleep.'

* * * * *

The ending of this tale may well strike one as a poignant account of the malignant power of the spirit of those who have died before their time, and have thus been thwarted in the middle of their self-fulfilment, to kill their beloved who has been left alone by Fate to live and to enjoy life. But this, I must assert, was not the purpose, the profound significance, put into it by those who told me this tale. They did not intend it to be a morbid tale, to overwhelm one with a sense of fear and gloom. They ended the tale on an unmistakable note of elation, not the fatalistic elation of acceptance, but the bright and glorious elation of an unshakable belief in the immortality of the soul and the eternal inseparability of those mated by God.

In Defence of Mr. J. B. Priestley

By C. L. R. Sastri, B.Sc.

'He nothing common did nor mean
Upon this memorable scene.'——*Andrew Marvell.*

(1)

Of course, I may, in a manner of speaking, be only begging the question. Mr. Priestley, for aught I know, may really be in no need of any defence: least of all from such a puny mortal as myself. I may, in fact, be even guilty of presumption in attempting to come to his rescue—real or imaginary. Mr. Priestley, indeed, is (if the comparison be allowed) like Falstaff: he stands four-square to all the winds that blow. And that, be it understood, not only in the matter of bulk: though, to do him but bare justice, it must be conceded that he has a generous share of it. Like it, or not, he has *embonpoint*: and, what is more, it is even possible that he may, any one of these days, be in the enviable position of running a neck-to-neck race with Mr. Chesterton as far as that is concerned. Mr. Chesterton, we know, is not ashamed of his proportions: on the contrary, he preens himself upon them. Has he not (to take only one example) himself taken the public into his confidence and told it, or them, how once, in a tram, he vacated his seat in favour of three ladies—thus revealing, to an astonished world, his innate, and exquisite, chivalry? Well, I can only hope that Mr. Priestley takes equally kindly to his girth. Coleridge, if I am not mistaken, has, among others, the following two beautiful lines in his *Ancient Mariner*:

Long and lean and lank
As is the soft, ribbed sea-sand.

In these days of 'long and lean and lank' men and women—men and women who, in Falstaff's immortal phrase,

look like 'cheeseparings made after supper,'—I do not think it right to ridicule, to pour scorn upon, portly people. On the other hand, we ought to wish them well, to wish more room to their elbows. All honour to them, I say! Let them, like the seed that fell upon good ground, multiply themselves a thousand-fold!

(2)

Mr. Priestley, let me point out, resembles Falstaff in another matter also. He has, like his predecessor, abundance of humour. Of course, nobody can equal Falstaff in that line. At any rate, nobody has equalled him up to now. All that I can lay down at the moment, with as much authority as possible, is that he (Mr. Priestley) has qualified himself in it as much as, if not more than, the next man: which, for the present, is, I fancy, good enough praise. No wonder that it has fallen to him to write perhaps the best book extant on English humour.

(3)

Talking about writing the 'best book' upon this and that, it is, surely, no mere coincidence, I think, that Mr. Priestley should have written the 'best book' upon the English novel (the best *short* book, I mean), the 'best book,' after Hazlitt (whom, indeed, he resembles in some ways), upon the English comic characters, the 'best book' upon Thomas Love Peacock, the 'best novel' as well as the 'best best-seller' (if I may say so) of modern times (*Angel Pavement* and *The Good Companions*), some of the 'best' essays—critical and other—and three of the 'best' modern plays (*Dangerous Corner* and *Laburnum Grove* and *Eden End*): not to speak of the 'best book' upon English humour, of which mention has already been made, and the 'best' book upon England. The two greatest living essayists are himself and Mr. Robert Lynd ('Y.Y.' of the *New Statesman*): though it is true—regrettably true—that, after his (deservedly) dazzling success in the novel form, he has (let us hope, only temporarily) abandoned essay-writing. All the same, a few

books of essays stand to his credit: of which by far the brightest is *Open House*: a book that called forth the most glorious eulogy from a writer of the distinction of Mr. H. M. Tomlinson: a writer, too, who never, if he can help it, praises any modern author. Why, some eminent persons have compared Mr. Priestley (as an essayist) to Hazlitt. Of course, one does not, in these days, write such long essays as the latter: there is simply not the time for them, even if there is the inclination, and, anyway, no journal would care to publish them: so that Mr. Priestley—or any other essayist, for that matter—is not in a position to display all, or even most, of his learning, wisdom, and mental gymnastics as the hermit of Winterslow was able to do. Moreover, it requires (does it not?) another Hazlitt to beat our well-known William: which, it only stands to reason, one dare not expect in these 'thin and ghastly times of ours.' Barring that, however, we can say with certainty that Mr. Priestley has come as near to Hazlitt as anybody has done: having the same range of subject, the same loftiness of thought, and the same polish of expression as his predecessor. Well, what more need be said concerning that?

(4)

From 1924 or 1925 to 1929 Mr. Priestley had been contributing essays regularly every week to the *Saturday Review*: then under the incomparable *regime* of Mr. Gerald Barry. Well, to digress for a moment, the *Saturday* of those days was simply coruscating with brilliant writing: with such stuff as 'dreams are made on.' Every issue of that celebrated weekly was a regular literary feast: a battle of wits, almost. Wordsworth has written of the French Revolution:

> France standing on the top of golden hours,
> And human nature seeming born again.

With some (pardonable) exaggeration, one can say the same thing of that period when the *Saturday* was the uncrowned king of English Weeklies. English literature looked

as if it were being re-born : anyway, to be young at that time was (to quote the Lake Poet again) 'very heaven.' Almost all the writers in that journal were distinguished persons: 'Stet'—Welby, and Ivor Brown, and Gerald Gould, and Edward Shanks, and L. P. Hartley, and a host of others: but none more so than Mr. Priestley himself, who was, indeed, the noblest Roman of them all, who, 'flamed in the forehead of the morning sky.' Well, it is a pity that those days are gone: and more so that Mr. Priestley has taken to 'fresh woods and pastures new.'

(5)

Mr. Priestley, the while he was entertaining us with his essays—each a gem in itself—was also writing criticism—literary criticism—of the best type. Indeed, he first became famous, not through his essays, which only served to enhance his already-won distinction, but through his book, *English Comic Characters* (John Lane), which produced a veritable ripple on the otherwise serene surface of the lake of English letters. He was then a very young man: in his early twenties, in fact. He is a young man, even now: being still on the right side of forty. Among his critical writings his earliest book is still his best. It contains, in my opinion, not only his best criticism, but also his best writing. This was followed by his collection of critical essays, called *Figures in Modern Literature* (also published by Lane), which won the applause of the late Sir Edmund Gosse and Mr. Arthur Waugh and others of the same calibre. Then came, in swift succession, his *George Meredith* and *Thomas Love Peacock* in the (new) *English Men of Letters* series, edited by Mr. (now) Sir J. C. Squire. About the former I shall not write much: disagreeing as I do with much of what he says of Meredith. I am, let me confess, not only a Priestley—but a Meredith—fan as well; and when these two *literati* clash I have no hesitation in plumping for the older gentleman. In that book Mr. Priestley, it will be remembered, propounded the curious thesis that Meredith was a great writer, but not a

great man. I am perfectly aware that the author of the *Egoist* is in disfavour now, Thomas Hardy—and even some lesser lights—being exalted much above him. It has become quite a fashion for any and everybody to confess blatantly that he cannot understand Meredith. I fail to see that it is a matter for self-congratulation: on the contrary. the misfortune, in my opinion, is theirs, not Meredith's. Meredith, no doubt, wrote freakishly in his later novels; and I am prepared to grant that the early part of *One of Our Conquerors* is a sheer insult to the English language. All this—and even more—may be admitted. But, surely, there remains—after every possible deduction has been made—something of Meredith that is unsurpassed in the literature of his country. Meredith is incomparably greater than Hardy, both as a man and as a writer. However, I shall not pursue the point further: except to deplore that such a discerning critic as Mr. Priestley should not have pressed his foot down on such literary flap-doodle. All the same, Mr. Priestley's criticism in this book is as profound as in his other books: the late Lord Oxford called it 'penetrating,' and regarded it as the most intelligent estimate of Meredith that he had ever come across. Anyhow, his *Peacock* deserved the full-throated praise of Sir Edmund Gosse as the best book (so far) about that curious writer: Mr. Priestley, strangely enough, preferring the father-in-law to the son-in-law.

(6)

I should like my readers to understand that Mr. Priestley was famous even before he 'launched on the Brahmaputra'—as he wittily said in another connection—of novel-writing: famous as a critic, and famous, also, as an essayist. Let this be remembered by those of his detractors who, now that Mr. Priestley is a 'best-selling' novelist, conveniently forget that fact and label him a 'low-brow' and, perhaps, the lowest brow that is alive. I know that Messrs. Desmond MacCarthy and R. Ellis Roberts and Hugh Ross Williamson (Editor of the *Bookman*—a magazine that is now incorporated

with the *London Mercury*—and worshipper at the shrine of Mr. T. S. Eliot) are the deadliest detractors of Mr. Priestley. Mr. MacCarthy's opinion is, certainly, valuable. But it is a fact that that gentleman has fallen upon evil days, allowing his critical perception to descend so low as to hail Mr. David Garnett as the master-novelist of the present day, and to applaud his every successive book as the finest that he has seen for a whole generation, and so forth. When I have said this I have, I think, said all that need be said about Mr. MacCarthy's present level of literary appreciation.

(7)

I have no space to write about Mr. Priestley's *The Good Companions* and *Angel Pavement* and *Faraway* and *Wonder Hero*, nor of his earlier novels, *Adam in Moonshine* and *Benighted* and *The Town Major of Miraucourt.* They speak for themselves. If, as the poet says, painting the lily and gilding refined gold and adding perfume to the violet are matters of supererogation, then I cannot help thinking that singing the praises of these books is equally so. The construction, as well as the style, of *Angel Pavement* have touched the high-water mark of English novel-writing; and, as for his characters, Mr. Jess Oakroyd is perhaps the only figure in recent English fiction who will live for ever—taking his place among such immortals as Falstaff, and my Uncle Toby, and Mr. Micawber, and the two Wellers. This is the opinion of Mr. Robert Lynd also, which he set forth succinctly in a recent issue of *John O'London's Weekly*.

(8)

Mr. Priestley needs no defence. But they have told it in Gath that he is a nobody in English letters. Well, it is a critical dictum to make the angels weep. 'Where O'Flaherty sits is the head of the table,' and where Mr. Priestley is is modern English literature.

The Re-creation of Indian Dance

By A. VENKATASWAMY, M.A.
(The Andhra University, Waltair)

It is a well-known fact that artistic India was in self-forgetful slumbers for a long time, till the magic touch of the Poet brought it back to life again. The service done by the Poet in this cause will earn the gratitude of generations.

To grasp the secret of the dance as portrayed by the Poet, we must clearly realise the spirit of Indian civilisation. Life is seen as a subtle rhythm, a mystic offering of love to the Divine. The significance of life to the ancient Indian lies in its partaking of the Divine. The half poetic and half philosophic musings of the Upanishadic *Rishis* point to this. It was this spirit that set aflame the imagination of the Ajanta artists. One who sees the frescoes cannot fail to understand the mystic lines of the figures as the last points of corporeality, the soft mellow hues and the subjection of groups to rhythm. The drawings were not copies from life, but an idealistic interpretation of it. The dance inaugurated by the Poet can be fully understood only by bearing all these facts in mind.

Coming to the dance itself, as portrayed by the Poet's pupils in *Shap Mochan*, it is nothing but a brilliant interpretation of all the ancient ideals mentioned above. We feel as if the Ajanta figures have come to life again in this drab age. The skill exhibited by the young girls and boys trained by the Poet is remarkable for their age. The dancers move about like lilies swayed by a gentle wind, or like the blue smoke of the altar incense rising in adoration. The rhythm of the hands and the feet captures 'un-heard melodies.' The movement of the fingers is exquisitely delicate. There is not the faintest idea of the spectacular, stormy, or cataclysmic. A forgotten world is re-created softly, almost imperceptibly. It is the *gopis* dancing, in unison with their Lord, the dance

of love,—not a representation of the world of clash, conflict, and turmoil. The spirit of the dance is entirely Indian, the like of which might not be seen elsewhere. Witnessing it we become mystics, dreamers, in a remote realm of light and love.

The costuming and make-up of the dancers has also been done magnificently and carefully to the last detail, in harmony with the spirit of the dance. They emphasise the postures and movements of the dancers. Though gold and silver have been freely used, the dresses do not appear gaudy. They are thoroughly ancient. As examples may be mentioned the ornament attached to the plaid of hair, and the bracelets on the arms, used by women-folk in villages even today. By all such careful details, time is miraculously switched back by hundreds of years.

It is very desirable that our cultured and educated young men and women (not in the sense of knowing a few bits of English and having meaningless degrees) take to the re-creation of Indian Dance. Our social life will be immensely enriched. Such efforts promise immense possibilities. They are of no less importance than our political and economic strivings.

Who Won in the Assembly?

By N. S. VARADACHARI, M.A., B.L.

Who won in the Assembly? Is it the Government which prides on its one achievement or rather lack of achievement,—its pusillanimous exercise of veto powers which no doubt nullified for the time being the wishes of the people,—or is it the Congress Party which, on account of its magnificent solidarity and unimpared discipline, could score such victories as did actually isolate Government from even its European and nominated supporters? The people of India stand vindicated in the eyes of the world by the straight conduct of their representatives, and the Government which is miscalled that 'of India' is shown up as a tiny bauble in the hands of the wirepullers of Whitehall, to whose solemn dictates the civilian autocrats here render obeisance and homage. Haughty officials like Sir James Grigg may assert that the Congress has done nothing, and can do nothing till it throws off its recalcitrance and wears the badge of recantation, but he who runs may read that, despite certification and repeated exercise of extraordinary powers, the Government has collapsed in its sinister attempt to isolate the Congress and thus crush it. In fact, if anything, repression has only added strength to the Congress. The Congress does not suffer thereby; its prestige is actually enhanced with every fresh exercise of Government's extraordinary powers. The claim that India has settled down to peace and order is disproved by every act of certification, which, in other words, is really a recognition of the fact that India is still far from the normal, or is on the war-path. Every safeguard which disfigures the India Bill is an eloquent testimony to the lack of moral fibre in British rule over our country. That coercion is the only ultimate safeguard is the bitterest conclusion to which Government has been driven, and this is nothing but a confession of abject defeat.

But what of the positive side of Congress achievement? The first success of the Congress, and the fullest success, was among the electors who repudiated repression and refused to be parties to it. The armoury of repression, however, is still full and the Government, not content with the retention of obsolete laws like the regulations of 1818 and 1819, are contemplating to replenish the statute book by flooding it with permanent amendments to the Criminal Law which will put the most arbitrary powers into the hands of the bureaucracy. As to what the Assembly would do with such a law, one hardly need doubt. It will consign it back to the Government which sponsors such measures. No weak betrayal, we may be sure, will any longer allow the Government to wear the mask of popular acquiescence. The electors' wishes will be fully carried out, for the pledge of a Congressman is as good in deed as in word.

This apart, the Congress has served to press the popular claim that the country is overtaxed and must be relieved of iniquitous tax burdens. The salt-tax must go and the Postal and Railway rates must be reduced to bearable levels; that was the claim of the Congress in the Assembly and it had the support of all the elected representatives in that House. The military burden, demanded our representatives, must be reduced very considerably both by retrenchment and Indianisation, while in the matter of military policy, the Congress desires to substitute real peace at the frontiers for the present bluff and bluster which arises out of a contempt of the tribesmen. To a subject country like ours groaning under tax-burdens, the most positive contribution which an Assembly can make will be a reduction in those burdens. If the Congress achieves this and nothing else, it will be entitled to the lasting gratitude of our people. Every rupee of tax taken off enables the peasant to lift his head and find a little comfort in additional doles of food. His aching back finds relief as the burden falls off, and it is only then that he will look upon education or public health as subjects in which to interest himself. It is this backing of the peasant that gives the

Congress its real strength. No more selfless service can be rendered to the people of India than to fight for the reduction of heavy taxation and replace a costly system of administration which spends a fourth of its own gross revenues in salaries and allowances, a percentage which no country meaning business can countenance. The Congress Party in the Assembly fought for such reduction and has justly earned the confidence of the nation.

Next to this in importance is the inauguration of a new work code which will find employment for the millions and at the same time keep out foreign exploitation. Thereby the Government undertakes huge publicity works on its own responsibility and keeps the wage level at a reasonable figure, making it impossible for industrialists to effect unjust cuts in an already dwindling wage. This the Congress Party pressed for through its members on the floor of the Assembly, and though the Government merely ridiculed the plan of raising large loans for any such scheme, it cannot resist popular pressure for long. Work for the languishing masses has been our slogan, and legislators of other parties lacking imagination and frightened at the idea of new commitments for the nation must be told that this will be the main plank in the coming years. Not one crore for village work and rural uplift, but several crores which will rebuild all our villages, rescue them from filth and change the face of their living, is the present plan: not an ideal at which we aim, but the live issue of our present fight with Government. There may be no peace in India till the face of the countryside is changed and the dry bones of the peasant find fresh blood flowing in them, and he finds additional food, a decent dwelling place, healthy surroundings, and an industrious family. The Congress Party based its programme on the service of the peasant which is not, as in the case of other parties copying the Congress programme and calling it by different names, a mere shibboleth or an election stunt, but a creed every word of which has been made good by the self-sacrifice of its workers.

The Congress Party has stood for freedom of speech and

association for all, including the Communists. Having been assailed by repression by Government in previous years, it could not have done otherwise. Its very presence is a solid bulwark of defence against new fetters being forged, though the Government has already wide powers and may not pay heed to its clamour for the repeal of existing laws.

The Congress has defeated Government eighteen times. But Government still clings to power, unyielding to the popular will. The Congress represents today the hope of a free India and it certainly forebodes ill for any Government which attempts to suppress what may be termed a righteous revolt. Who wins? Is it Authority parading in the robes of repression, or is it the oppressed who, in spite of repeated lashes, gather renewed strength and adorn the fray? Let the people of India and the Congress answer. The voice of freedom says unmistakably: 'Join the Congress, for it is the power that wins.'

The Moon is Dead!

Stop for a moment and let me hear
The wail of the night-wind across the desolate town,
And shivers of the trees on the lawn.
A pigeon plaintively croons from her cote in the tower;
Or is it the night mourning the dead moon?

Yes, the moon is dead!
The sky has drawn a shroud across her face--
A dark cloud-fabric—
The huddled town-shape stands bleak in sorrow;
The night-wind wails:

Touch me not now,
There's a wound in my heart no caress can heal;
No, do not speak; only hear.
The shriek that rises from the depths of despair
No kiss can smother.

How can I tell you what I and the earth know?
That flesh our flesh——the moon is dead!

PREMENDRA MITRA

I let you go by

Ah ! Could I kiss you now, and lose myself
In the flood of your dark singing mystery—
Primeval, death-deep tide !

Could I kiss you on the mouth, and my thrilled soul
Peer into the immensity of your immeasurable being !
Could I, in the sea-soft touch of your lips, find
The meaning of things—beyond, beyond the senses !

But I cannot reach you ; for the sap of life
That would have sipped the ecstacy of the sun,
Is trapped in the seed.

I have waited too long and toyed with empty words ;
They have starved my soul, and now like dead crusts
They lie round me, choking the apertures of life ;
I try to reach you through swathes of age-old drivel.

Vainly, idly I talk to you—you, who will not hear ;
—The water-soaked faggot meets the flint in vain :
I let you go by.

PREMENDRA MITRA

Reviews

[We shall be glad to review books in all Indian languages and in English, French, and German. Books for review should reach the office at least SIX WEEKS in advance of the day of publication of the Journal.]

ENGLISH

The University of Nalanda.—By H. D. Sankalia, M.A., L.L.B. With a preface by the Rev. H. Heras, S. J., St. Xavier's College, Bombay. (Published by B. G. Paul & Co., 12, Francis Joseph St., Madras, 1934. Pages 245, pls. 17 & maps 4. Price Rs. 5.)

The book under review deals with a subject of absorbing interest,—the evolution of a system of education that was available at Nalanda, the famous monastery in Bihar which was the centre of the Mahayanist world in the centuries preceding the downfall of Buddhism in India proper. This system of education, though simple, compared very well with similar systems that characterised Occidental institutions known as 'city schools,' 'studium generale' and 'university.' The seat of such a simple system was the *asrama,* the *matha* and *vihara*; and Nalanda was one such *vihara* that stood first 'as a place which imparts knowledge in all the arts and sciences, and secondly, for a place which holds out invitation to students of every kind from all over the world.'

Tradition associated the name of Nalanda with an episode in the life of the Buddha and with some of his disciples. Probably a monastery, to which the author is inclined to assign the lofty position of 'an international unversity,' existed there from a very early date—how early we are not in a position to determine,—but it was only in the days of the Chinese pilgrims, Hiuen Tsiang and I-Tsing that it appears to have become the centre of Buddhism, a veritable 'mine of learning' to which scholars from the entire Buddhist world flocked, a position which it enjoyed till the twelfth century A.D. We hear of pilgrim-students from China, Tibet and Korea, of Magadhan princes and princes from the country around Gazni, sons of nobles from Kanchipuram, Purushapura

(Peshawar) and Samatata wending their way to Nalanda in search of knowledge. It was again at Nalanda that the famous Harsha and Balaputradeva, the king of Java and Sumatra, built *viharas* for students to prosecute their studies. Hiuen Tsiang records that the total number of monks, either belonging to the monastery or strangers residing therein, always reached 10,000 and that 'within the temple they arrange every day about 100 pulpits, and the students attend these courses without any fail, even for a minute.' The outside courts that afforded shelter to the students were of four storeys and included the priests' chambers. Luckily the remains of those buildings have lately been excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India and the site is now called Bargaon or Bargav after a little village of that name not far from Rajagriha, the ancient capital of Magadha. According to Mr. Page 'its characteristic features are a long range of monasteries on the east side, a similar range of *stupas* on the west, and a short range of monasteries to bound the area on the south. Down the centre of the site runs an approach avenue, entered, it would seem, from the north.' The site shows several levels, a succession of structures erected one over the other, but to none of the levels are archaeologists inclined to ascribe a date prior to the 6th century A.D.

After Hiuen Tsiang had left Nalanda, having learnt the *Yogasastra* and carrying an excellent impression of the university which, according to the author, is 'one that would make any institution proud,' there came about 57 pilgrims from China, Japan and Korea, most of whom went to Nalanda for study. Some came by sea and others by land. These preceded I-Tsing who speaks about them. I-Tsing came by sea or by what is called the 'southern route' and stayed at Nalanda for ten-years. Though nothing is said about his studies there, we are indebted to him for recording minutely the customs and manners of the priests and the life of the students. And it is these observations that enable us to follow the author's arguments for choosing to call Nalanda 'an international university,' which position it appears to have enjoyed even in the 9th century. The work of the University was not confined to the teaching of students who were within its precincts. Scholars were sent on deputation to distant places like Korea, Japan, China and Ceylon 'to light the lamp of knowledge in these foreign lands' and we have the names of luminaries like Kumaravijaya, Gunavarman,

Paramartha, Subhakara Simha, Dharmadeva, and Pou-to-kito on record which go to show the international character of the University of Nalanda.

The author has successfully demonstrated in chapter ix that Nalanda was 'far greater than Monte Cassino, and held a more important position in India than Cluny and Clairvaux in France,' that 'what Buddhism did for religion, Nalanda did for learning, and that it was much more than an international university. It was a centre where *bhikshus* assembled from the four quarters of the world, was an abode of Bodhisattvas well-versed in Tantras and of the eight great holy personages, was a library, and finally it was an emporium supplying the four requisites, medicine to the sick, alms to the beggars, garments to the naked, and shelter to the homeless. It will be easy to agree with the author that 'it was at once a monastery for the monks to reside, a University, and a library,········a hospital and finally a free institution, catering to all the needs of the poor.' The golden age of Nalanda formed part of the Pala period, the Pala kings of Bengal having been great patrons of the monastery. The later art of Nalanda belongs to the art of the Pala empire. Tantrism that found a congenial home at Nalanda opened up a new field, *viz.*, art and iconography. Innumerable images found at Nalanda answering the descriptions detailed in the Tantras gave rise to a new school of art, the Nalanda Art or the Pala Art. A comparative study of these images and those found in Java has led scholars to believe that Nalanda exercised a great influence on the religious life in the Malay Archipelago.

The fall of Nalanda is due to many intrinsic causes that precipitated the downfall of Buddhism. Kumarila and Sankara were two of the greatest opponents of the age. Buddhism was hemmed in from all sides, political, moral and philosophical, and 'only one thing remained to exterminate it, *viz.*, the annihilation of its visible existence, its abodes, the Buddhist monasteries,' and this was accomplished by the Mohammedan invader, Bakhtiyar Khilji, at the beginning of the 13th century. Many a monastery fell, chief of them being Nalanda, Vikramasila and Odantapura.

The author has done his task well and deserves the thanks of all for his valuable contribution. A word of praise is due to the publishers, B. G. Paul and Co. for the excellent

get-up, faultless letter-press and clear blocks of photographs that the publication under review reveals.

T. N. RAMACHANDRAN

Bulletin of League of Nations Teaching No. 1.—(Published by the Secretariat, League of Nations, Geneva.)

This Bulletin affords very interesting and instructive reading. Prof. Gilbert Murray leads off with a characteristically clear and cogent paper on 'International education Today.' M. Jean Piaget follows with a weighty utterance on 'Is Education for Peace Possible?' Jose Castillejo of the Madrid University writes on 'Education for Peace.' This is by no means a chance grouping. In the first of these papers Prof. Murray draws attention to how much education is being made the means of propaganda. Swords are rattling everywhere in Europe and life is being stampeded by battle cries, if not precisely for active war yet for an internal organisation which, in its technique and atmosphere, is so near to open hostilities. The old political values—liberty and equality--have never been so much in disgrace as now. They are looked upon as things fit only for doddering grannies to talk about. Power, centralization, are the motives of fashionable political craft. In favour of these ideas opinion is being canvassed and the children are being taught accordingly. Naturally the League and its ardent promoters are alarmed. They affirm the importance of education and how education can shape the mind of the young into a sober view of things. Of course to a hasty mind this may very well look like Nero fiddling when Rome was burning. But an altered motive and method of education can produce results only slowly. The results may not be instantaneous but they will be lasting.

The Bulletin contains an excellent resume of the work of the League, and its interest is greatly enhanced by the three wireless talks given by Prof. Anesaki of the Tokio University on 'East and West,' Prof. Shotwell of the Columbia University on 'International Outlook in the Social Sciences,' and Prof. Radhakrishnan on 'The World Challenges the League of Nations,' respectively. Indian readers will doubtless feel greatly and specially interested in one of the best talks ever given by their great countrymen. The Bulletin ends with a

few official documents which are just what official documents are, very dull but very useful. We do not know if the League could afford to broadcast these bulletins amongst all schools, colleges, public reading rooms and libraries. But every attempt should be made to reach as large a circle as possible, for the League may not in itself be a positive good but it seems to be the only rational alternative to chaos and carnage.

Enchantments.—By V. N. Bhushan, M.A. (The Ananda Academy, Masulipatam.)

In the collection of these poems under the present name 'Enchantments,' Mr. Bhushan sustains his reputation for ardent feeling and fluent and sometimes even eloquent expression. To preserve a distinctly Indian atmosphere in imagery and sentiment—and express oneself in English verse—is not an easy thing; and even so Mr. Bhushan has achieved success. There is no point in comparing a poet's work with that of another and giving him a rank. Mr. Bhushan may not belong to the order of the masters. But he feels sincerely and sings sweetly, and that is enough for most of us.

M. S. C.

Kabir and the Bhakti Movement.—By Mohan Singh, M.A., Ph.D., D.Litt. (Published by Atmaram & Sons, Lahore. Pages 100. Price Rs. 2).

Kabir's life and his religious tenets have been a fruitful field of research for scholars both Eastern and Western. The author of the present monograph with his knowledge of Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati and Persian is well qualified to shed new light on a subject, old but eternally new. In his preface he promises the public two more volumes on Kabir, one dealing with his religion, the other dealing with his poetry. The volume under review deals with the biographical details of Kabir, and it has been the author's endeavour to reconstruct the historical image of the medieval saint rescued from the outgrowths of superstitious myths Some of his findings run counter to the current notions on the subject, and he joins issue with such scholars as Pandit Shyam Sundar Das and Prof. Keay. The author places the fullest reliance on the Sikh sources and his knowledge of the *Adi Granth* enables him to supply the corrective in several contexts. His

conclusions can by no means be said to be final; but such as they are, they may be mentioned here. Kabir was born anywhere between 1360 and 1398 and he died between 1420 and 1449. He was therefore posterior to Ramananda and anterior to Nanak. Kabir was not a direct disciple of Ramananda, nor was Nanak Kabir's disciple. The Goshtis that are on record between such notables as Nanak, Kabir, Goraknath and Dharm Das are all later manufactures by the respective followers to glorify their own Gurus in particular. Kabir Panth was organised in the latter half of the sixteenth century after the model of the Sikh Panth.

This is the picture the author gives of the historical Kabir: 'A Mahommedan of character, independence and conviction; simple in habits, merciful to all, extremely hospitable; rather pugnacious, frank to a fault, assimilative; genuinely fond of a retired, contemplative life, without any ambitions of guruship, picked up and idolized by the hero-worshipping, superstitious and tolerant Hindu and dropped by the intolerant Moslem; we bow to him for all these human virtues; but we refuse to accept him as what the Hindu worshippers have made him out to be, a fallen Brahmin disciple of a Brahmin Vaishnava, who through the grace of his Guru rose to be the greatest mystic of medieval India.'

The form of this monograph is rather to be regretted. It is far from being a connected account of Kabir's life as understood by the author. Several sections are more or less critical notes on published and unpublished records. Some of them could have been conveniently reduced to footnotes. But there is no doubt that, on the whole, the book is an important contribution to Kabir literature and the public may await the other volumes with interest.

Flower Offerings.—By Prabhakar R. Kaikini, with a foreword by Prof. Armando Menezes. (Pages 40. Price Re. 1.)

Ever since Rabindranath Tagore won his world-wide renown, the number of young Indians who seek to realise their literary being in the English language has been on the increase. But prose-poetry, which was a profound symbol of Tagore's triumph, has been in almost all other cases a measure of despair. They have, as Prof. Menezes points out, been forced to 'grapple with the terrors of a foreign tongue,

swelling the tears of a poet with the tears of a scholar.' Kaikini's 'Flower Offerings' is a collection of early efforts. Tagore is his spiritual master. The very ground and the seedlings of his poetry are derived therefrom. There are far too many echoes of Rabindranath and the very name 'Flower Offerings' (Pushpanjali) is an echo of 'Gitanjali.' Here is a good instance (page 19):

'What are you doing here in this fearful lonely corner, girl?' I asked. 'When the busy throng of buyers subsides, when the merry ducks call no more and vanish into the cool shelter of that yonder grove, when the angry maiden of the noon lies asleep after her passion is gone, when the boatman leaves his ferry to take his food, I come out of my hiding place and cast about this net to catch my long lost glorious dreams of love and life.'

But both language and thought seem to fall off in lines such as these: 'The free souls enjoy free flights of joy in the wideness of infinity reigned over by Thy mercy, O my Lord.' In general, the poems are marked by a sincere and expectant spirit, though the author may not have cultivated in full that universalization of being which can address the Divine in terms at once familiar and intimate. The book is adorned with a frontispiece by Pulin Behari Dutt and is dedicated to Srimathi Sarojini Devi.

G. V. S.

SANSKRIT

Valmiki Ramayana—Condensed in the Poet's own words. Text in Devanagari and English translation by Vidyasagara Vidyavachaspati Prof. P. P. S. Sastri, B.A. (Oxon) M.A.—(Published by G. A. Natesan & Co., Madras. Price Re. 1-4-0.)

It is well-nigh impossible to condense such an intensely mellifluous poem like the Ramayana whose every word is soaked in honey, so to say, and allows no scope for choice. But in these days of hurry and light reading, condensed editions of the classics have become a necessity. And Messrs. G. A. Natesan & Co., deserve to be congratulated on this score for giving the public a beautiful condensed edition of the epic.

The task of abridging texts is in itself an onerous one and it is even more so in the case of the Ramayana. There are

passages in the work of Valmiki that are the special favourites of scholars, but no abridgment can include all of them. If a great number of the favourite passages of every scholar find a place in the abridgment, it can be counted as a success. Judged by these standards and the difficulty of condensing, the present edition must be rated a real success. The value of the edition would however have been enhanced if the errata of the Sanskrit matter had been more thorough, and a few at least of the exquisite descriptions of Valmiki, like the Pampavarnana, Jaladagamavarnana, Saradvarnana, Lankavarnana and Pushpakavarnana, had been included in the text. As it is, it appears as if narrative interest has alone been retained at the expense of real poetic beauty. Many incidents from Rama's life that ought to find a place in the narrative are left out. It is impossible to think of Rama's story without the incident of Ahalya's release from her curse. The *Dhanus* (bow) is not mentioned as Siva's. The description of jubilant Ayodhya on the eve of Rama's coronation and Kaikeyi's offer of bark garments to Rama and Sita in the presence of Dasaratha, his whole harem, Vasishta etc., could have been included. Viradha's incident should have found a place in the book. Similarly Rama's jest with Surpanakha. There is no mention of Sarabhanga or Sabari. The tests to which Rama was put by Sugriva find no place in the text. How Lakshmana brought Sugriva to his senses in the *Sarat* season is not mentioned. Though stories like that of Svayamprabha or Sampati admit of omission, others like the story of Visvamitra or the descent of the Ganges, Hanuman's encounter with Simhika, Lanka and Akshaputra, deserve narration. Though some such incidents have been left out, the omission has been more than balanced by a judicial choice of happy passages full of moral teaching and worldly wisdom. It is hoped that a future edition will include these incidents as well. Pandit A. M. Srinivasacharya has achieved a really difficult task.

The translation of the verses in English is another feature of this book and makes it all the more welcome. There are those who, though genuinely interested in a study of the epic, are handicapped for want of good translations. The rendering in English is simple and lucid and helps an understanding of the text. Prof. P. P. S. Sastri has done a real service by giving this translation with the text. The Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri contributes a charming preface. It is a book

that should find a place in every Indian's pocket, to be read and enjoyed at all times. If it were only priced cheaper it would surely reach a wider public and make its mark like the edition of the Bhagavadgita as a popular book. The purpose of this book would be more than achieved if it serves as an introduction to a study of the original text of Valmiki and 'inspires in its readers,' as Professor P. P. S. Sastri desires, 'a yearning to live up to the ideals set forth, and creates a desire for a fuller acquaintance with the rich treasures of Sanskrit poetry.'

The Ramayana Diary.—(Published by the Sanskrit Academy, Madras. Printed at the M. L. J. Press. Price As. 8.)

'He who with devotion hears (recited) a quarter of a verse or even a word of the Ramayana attains the place of Brahma and is perpetually honoured by Him.'

That is the promise held out to the readers and the hearers of the sacred epic. The Ramayana Diary, which contains a beautiful collection of didactic and epigrammatic verses, more than supplies an excellent popular means for attaining the fruit held out in the lines given above.

The book opens with a significant 'Good Morning' appropriately styled 'Ramayana-suprabhata' inspiring us to do our daily godly work. The Diary is a splendid means of realising the ideal given in the preface, 'he wakes well, who wakes upon good and inspiring ideas.' The contents reveal to us a variety of subjects most judiciously chosen and arranged. The pages of the Diary can be ransacked, and nowhere can it be said that a verse or a line other than a worthy gem of Valmiki fit to be retained and carefully guarded in the treasury of every human heart, has found its way into the book. Every possessor of the Diary would do well to get by heart the two or three lines that are given on every page that denotes one day of a month. It is not a Diary for any particular year but is a common one for all time. The excellent printing and get up make the Diary most inviting and the Sanskrit Academy has done a real service to the public by issuing such a beautiful brochure. The value of such a popular book as this would certainly be enhanced by the addition (which is hoped would be made in a future edition) of a lucid English translation of the Sanskrit matter. It is

hoped that there would be no dearth of Indian pockets with the lovely Ramayana Diary nestling in them.

Copies can be had of the Hon. Secretary, The Sanskrit Academy, 'The Ashrama,' Luz Church Road, Mylapore, Madras.

C. SIVARAMAMURTHY

TELUGU

Sahitya-Tattva-Vimarsanamu.—By Jonnalagadda Satyanarayanamurty, M.A., B.L. (2, Luz Church Road, Mylapore, Madras, Pages 206. Price Re. 1-4-0.)

This collection of literary essays by Mr. Murty is a sign of the awakening of interest in literature and art among the Andhra public. Criticism has advanced considerably since the days of Viresalingam and Venkataraya Sastry. The journals have thrown open their columns to a discussion of literary topics, and talented scholars like Mr. Murty have eagerly availed themselves of this opportunity to educate their countrymen on the right lines. Mr. Murty is a linguist of high attainments; he has made a special study of Hindi, Bengali and Sanskrit literatures. He is acquainted with the methods of literary criticism in the West. In addition to all this, he is gifted with imagination and sympathy. There is a slight tendency towards verbosity and, in certain places, he is obscure. But these do not touch the substance of his achievement as a critic. We commend this book with the utmost pleasure. Sir S. Radhakrishnan contributes an appreciative Foreword.

K. R.

Opinion of

Sir C. V. Raman, M.A., D.Sc., F.R.S., N.L.

I have entrusted with the Indian Photo-Engraving Company the making of line- and half-tone blocks to illustrate the scientific articles appearing in the Proceedings of the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science. As our illustrations are intended to assist in the understanding of new scientific results, it is of the utmost importance that the reproductions should be clear and accurate. I may say at once that the work of the Indian Photo-Engraving Company has fully come up to our requirements.

C. V. Raman

25th May 1926